MANY FRONTS

LEWIS R. FREEMAN

To

WWI

Captain Card, OP 998

Recalling a happy voyage with him in the "Antigua"

Lewis R. Freeman.

Pasadena,

February 4, 1934.

MANY FRONTS

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BY
LEWIS R. FREEMAN

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L. R. F.

October, 1918.

MANY FRONTS

THE FIGHT FOR THE GARDEN OF EDEN

I

I HAD known F—— through years of hunting and sports in India, but never until the night that our old British-India coaster lay off the Shat-el-Arab bar waiting for the turn of the tide to run up to Bassorah, did I hear him speak of the things that were really next his heart. Then it was that I was vouchsafed transient vision of the outer strands of the previsionary web England was weaving beyond the marches of India against events to come. I will give his story, as nearly as I can remember, in his own words.

For the best part of the last five years [said he], I have been coming to Arabia and Mesopotamia on "language study." In all of that time I have not been back to England, and I am almost a stranger to the officers of my own

regiment. I talk like an Arab, I am beginning to think like an Arab, and, what with sunlight and dirt that have gone so deep under my epidermis that they will never come out, I shall soon look like an Arab. Perhaps in time—you'd never believe the appeal of the Koran till you've bowed toward Mecca, with a Bedouin on either side of you, morning and evening, for six months at a stretch—I shall pray like an Arab. I have had smallpox, dysentery,—which has become practically chronic,—and a dozen varieties of fevers and skin diseases, and I'm mottled from head to foot with "Aleppo button" scars, two of which have never healed. I've been alone so much that I talk to myself even in Calcutta and Simla. The Persians in this region distrust me, the Russians and Germans hate me, and the Turks are perfectly frank in saying that they will send me on "the long pilgrimage" if ever a fair chance offers.

All that my Government does is to allow my pay to go on and to provide me with a passport that will land me at Koweit, Bassorah, or Bagdad. If I get into trouble they will not—cannot, in fact—do as much for me as they would for a spindle-legged Hindu coolie. And all this on the chance that, some time before I am retired for old age or invalided from the Indian army,

the Great White Bear will try to come down to the Persian Gulf to slake his age-long thirst. In this contingency, of course, there is no denying the fact that I shall be very much in demand, especially if operations are carried on in my own "sphere," that of North-Eastern Arabia and Southern Mesopotamia, up to a line drawn from Bagdad to Hitt.

Afoot, or by horse or camel, I have traversed almost every square mile of this region. There is not a bazaar from Kerbela to Koweit in which, disguised, I cannot mingle unsuspected in the throng, or, in case of need, call upon friends who will do anything, from giving me a cigarette or a handful of dates to risking their lives to save my own. I also know every one of the greater, as well as most of the lesser, Bedouin sheikhs whose peoples roam the deserts between Bassorah and Damascus; and with one of the most powerful of these—his camels are over 100,000 in number and his sheep and goats three times that—I have gone through the "blood brotherhood" ceremony. The blood of our arms has actually mingled, and each is pledged to stop at no act to serve the other. My friends, I need hardly say, are all Arabs, Chaldeans, Syrians, Jews, or people of one of the other subject races of this region; to the

Turk, courteous as he is to me socially in Bagdad and Bassorah, my name is anathema. A week hence, for instance, I shall exchange Oriental amenities with the Vali of Bagdad in his garden on the banks of the Tigris. He will toast me in scented coffee and drink to the success of my visit; and all the while a double guard of police will be watching the gates to prevent my getting away to the desert and my Arab friends. Personally, I know it would pain him if I were to be shot in the dark for neglecting to answer a sentry's challenge; but officially he is dead keen for it, and there is no doubt that it would do him a lot of good in Stamboul, where he is not in very high favour at present.

The whole thing, when all is said and done, resolves itself down to about this: If a war involving operations in this "sphere" comes within the next twenty years, I,—and a couple of other chaps who are doing the same sort of work,—provided I do not lose my life, or my health, or the best of my faculties in the interim, will probably break all records outside of a Central American revolution for quick promotion. I should probably be a brigadier-general at forty, with ten or a dozen letters after my name. But if, as is likely, there is no war, I shall probably continue these little jaunts

into the desert until my health gives out, when, at best, I shall be invalided home and retired on the half-pay of a captain or a major.

So, you see, my future depends entirely upon whether or not some of our neighbours, or would-be neighbours, see fit to "start something" in this little neck of Central Asia within the next decade or two. And now that Russia is in the Entente, and we are acting so entirely in concert with her in Persia, I'm very much afraid that it's going to be a case of the "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick."

II

The following day we caught the river steamer at Bassorah, and four days later arrived at Bagdad, F—— putting up at the grim brown fort which housed the British Consulate, post office, and telegraph station. I saw him on and off for a week, usually at tiffins or dinners given for him by some of his British friends. At other times he was not to be found. "F—— *Sahib* gone to bazaar," his Pathan bearer invariably answered my inquiries; and F—— himself volunteered no more than that he was spending a good deal of time "renewing old acquaintances." Then, at the end of about ten days, without a good-bye to anybody, so far

as I could learn, he dropped from sight. "F—— is off again to his Arabs," said his friends.

"I am much relieved," the Consul whispered to me. "They hung on him like leeches this time, but F—— got away by togging up as an Armenian *arabana* driver when they were expecting him as an Arab. The Armenian came here, F—— stained his face, got into the chap's clothes, and actually drove the *arabana*, with a load of passengers, to Kerbela. The Turks nabbed the real driver when they caught him going out on foot, but got little out of him, and I don't think they know yet exactly what happened. F—— is far into the desert by this time."

This was in 1912, and at that time no one—least of all F——, who had the most to gain by such an event—appeared to dream that the blood-drenched plains of Babylonia and Assyria were likely to echo ere many years to the tramp of hostile armies. The broad scope of Germany's activities, extending far beyond the mere construction of the Bagdad Railway, was evident to every one; but, this notwithstanding, the general impression seemed to be that the whip-hand in this region was Russia's. This feeling was aptly expressed by an old Turkish officer with whom I discussed Near Eastern politics at Mosul. "The Germans may build railroads,"

he said, punctuating his measured speech with puffs from a gurgling *hookah;* "and the British may build ships, and the Turks may build dams and canals,"—referring to the reclamation work at Hindia on the Euphrates,—"but in the end the Great White Bear will come down to the Persian Gulf and have his drink of warm water."

That the Germans had ambitious plans for controlling the commerce of the incalculably rich Tigro-Euphrates Valley no one doubted, or even that the Kaiser aimed at some sort of political control. But that German influence should prevail over that of Britain and Russia in Constantinople, to the extent of aligning the Porte on the side of the Kaiser against the Triple Entente, was not dreamed of in Mesopotamia, even by the Turks themselves. The price to the Entente, however, of alienating Italy from the Triple Alliance by acquiescing in that Power's conquest of Tripoli, was the irretrievable loss of Turkey's friendship; and with the succession of Enver Pasha to the War Ministry at the end of the first Balkan conflict, there is no doubt that the Porte stood absolutely committed to action with Germany. After the outbreak of the present war, Turkey's participation on the side of the Central Powers was only a matter of the Kaiser's nod. Enver Pasha,

educated in Berlin and always actively anti-Russian, had spent nearly two years in preparation for the struggle which the Germans had doubtless assured him was inevitable; and the making ready for a fight to the death at the Dardanelles was not allowed to interfere with a general stiffening of the Eastern defences. This, briefly, was the way in which it came about that Britain is facing Turkey instead of the long-prepared-against Russia in the Mesopotamian "theatre." But I will let my friend F——, to whom it was given to help set and stage the opening scenes of the play, tell something of what happened up to the moment of his tragic exit.

Late in the fall of 1914, a hastily scribbled card reached me in California. "Things looming large at last," it read. "Am off for the 'P.G.'* to-morrow with big work in prospect. Will write when I can get anything of interest passed." The card was post-marked Karachi, and dated but a few days previous to Turkey's official entry into the war. I took it, therefore, that the Indian Government had discounted this action, and that at the moment the Turks opened hostilities by bombarding the Russian coast, F——, doubtless with considerable forces, was on the way to his "sphere."

* Persian Gulf.

The promised letter was long delayed, and when it came bore the post-mark Bassorah, not in the pothook Turkish characters, but in plain English letters, while the blue two-and-a-half anna stamp of India appeared in the corner formerly sacred to the narrow, pink, half-gummed one-piastre sticker which you had often to affix with a pin to keep it from falling off. Thus ran the letter :—

"I am writing you this from the one-time home port of 'Sinbad the Sailor,' which, I am rejoiced to say, has been under our flag for some days. The Turks had considerable forces of seasoned troops here,—doubtless you remember how much of the old town was taken up by barracks,—but, evidently because they did not expect us so soon, or in such force, had done little in the way of outpost defence. This, coupled with the facts that our naval strength was overwhelming and the river very ineffectively mined, made what might have been an operation of tremendous difficulty comparatively easy. The guns of our cruisers outranged those of the old forts at the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab, and, with sweepers working ahead of them, the light-draught gunboats peppered so hotly those dense palm groves which fringe the river banks that we had little

difficulty in fighting our way through them without great loss.

"Co-operating with the advance up the river, our main force was landed above Koweit and marched across the open desert to attack Bassorah on the west, threatening the rear of the Turkish positions on the left bank. Here the Turk could have made us no end of trouble had he been in sufficient force, for the lowlands were partly inundated and a defence of the practicable routes could have been made very effective.

"It was the weakness of the opposition met here that first led us to hope that Bassorah was not going to be strongly defended. Although the advance resolved itself into little more than a series of outpost actions, the period was an anxious one for us—and especially for me—in that it put to the acid test the result of our work, not only in forecasting the capricious and variable overflow, but also in conciliating the no less capricious and variable Arabs of a region nominally subject to Turkey. I can only tell you now that things turned out, and are continuing to turn out, even better than we had any reason to hope they would. There was no suggestion of a menace to our exposed left flank from the hordes of curious but in no wise hostile Arabs

who showed themselves all along the way, and the censor will probably not allow me to tell you that our transport and commissariat, if nothing more, will probably be much helped by active assistance from this source. [Here several sentences, doubtless telling something more of the attitude of the Arabs, were obscured by the censor's brush.] So you will see that the Turk is reaping the harvest he deserves from his sowing of harshness and duplicity among the Bedouins, and that the time and efforts of us 'language students' who have worked this sphere will not have been spent in vain.

"The Turks have undoubtedly been quite sound in deciding not to make a stand at Bassorah. With the sea approaches in our hands, and with the city entirely encompassed by desert and marsh, the holding of it for any time would have hinged upon command of either the Tigris or the Euphrates all the way to the rich agricultural region to the west of Bagdad. As the cutting of this line by us was only a matter of time, the city would have been isolated and forced to withstand a siege which could only have ended in the capture of whatever forces were locked up there. As it is, the most of these forces are now at liberty to dispute our advance, through a very difficult country, to Mesopotamia

and Bagdad. Here it seems certain we shall have all the fighting we care for.

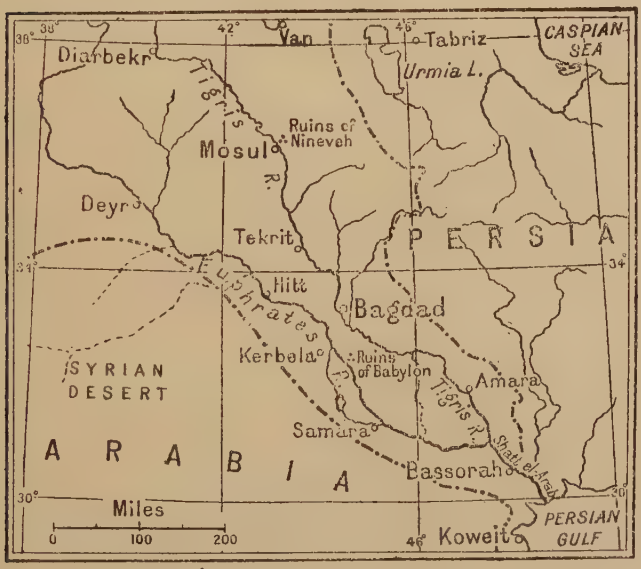
"I have not mentioned the fact that I have received my captaincy and am assigned to the general staff. In an ordinary campaign the latter circumstance would mean a lot of dreary consultations at headquarters, and no action. Here, Allah be praised, the case is quite different. R——, K—— (the two chaps who have also worked this sphere), and I are always called in, if we chance to be on hand, when the maps are unrolled; but most of the time the whole lot of us are off on something else. R—— has been through the Turkish lines twice, once spending three days in Kurna, their advanced base, and I have been off on a week's journey to receive renewed assurances of the friendship of my Bedouin 'blood-brother.' It is going to be a jolly amusing game."

III

Another letter came from F—— a month later, this being in answer to one I had rushed off on receiving the card announcing his departure for the Persian Gulf:—

"You ask what we are driving at here, by which I suppose you mean, 'What is our plan of campaign?' This, obviously, is a question

I can answer only in the most general way. Our principal purpose in the present campaign will be the occupation of southern and central Mesopotamia up to and including the cities of Bagdad



MAP OF THE TIGRO-EUPHRATES VALLEY,

Where the operations against Bagdad were carried out.

and Kerbela, a region roughly corresponding to what might be called ancient Babylonia proper. Our objective in this is twofold. First, to gain control of all the irrigated—and hence highly productive—portion of the Tigro-Euphrates Valley,

and, second, to establish ourselves strongly upon the flank of Persia in the event that that country should show a disposition to make common cause with our enemy.

"There is little doubt that the advance to Bagdad will be a fight all the way. The most difficult country will be that between here and about fifty miles north of where the Tigris and Euphrates come together. Most of this area is marshy all the year, and practically all of it will be under water from the spring floods by the time we are ready to get into it. An endless network of 'canals' and backwater channels makes it practically impossible to advance on foot even across much of the overflow country, and one of the main reasons for our long halt in Bassorah has been the training of our men in the use of the various native craft which will have to figure in our transport. Luckily, the Turks will be under the same handicap as ourselves in this region, and our superior artillery and organisation are sure to give us the 'edge.' The real fighting is going to come when we emerge upon the level alluvial plains of Central Mesopotamia. Here the enemy will have the Bagdad railway at his back, and, without doubt, a pretty complete little system of German-made light railways to keep him in munitions and food.

"It may be that it will take us to the end of 1915 to attain our first goal. Then, if a decision in Europe has not been reached in the meantime, our next general advance would be up the Tigris to Samara, Tekrit, and Mosul, and up the Euphrates to Hitt and Deyr; this advance would place in our hands an upland grain-growing region of considerable productivity. Still another campaign would have to be launched to occupy the country up to a line from Aleppo to Mardin or Diarbekir; but Russia should reach this region from the Caucasus before we can get there from the south. Upon the guns and munitions which the Germans are able to send through to Bagdad will depend the character of the stand that the Turk is going to make in Babylonia.

"But what a game it is going to be, this fight for the old Garden of Eden,—with the high-banked canals and the crumbling walls of Babylon and Hitt serving for trenches and forts, and the *khans* which sheltered Ali Baba and Haroun-al-Raschid as outposts! Why, the 'G.C.C.' and I have even discussed how we are going to use that isolated old *tepe* of Birs Nimrud —which some call the 'Tower of Babel'—when the time comes!

"Our transport for the new campaign will probably be the most remarkable thing of the

kind ever assembled. The fact that the country into which we are advancing will be largely under water will compel us to become practically amphibious. On land we are using camels, horses, mules, and donkeys, while on the water the services of everything, from the native *balems*, *gufas*, and *kaleks* to shallow-draught gunboats and river-steamers, will be in demand. The old Bagdad side-wheelers have all been converted into gunboats, but even their slight draught of five or six feet is too great for all but the main river-channels. One of these, by the way, went into action the other day with an armour improvised from mats of dried dates. Of course the Turkish shrapnel made an awful mess of it, and, I am sorry to say, also of the chaps behind it.

"The direction of the training of our men in the use of the native watercraft has been one of my recent duties. The *balem* is a gondola-like sort of boat which has long been used for passenger transport on the canals and rivers of this region. It may be rowed, sculled, or paddled, and since it is of fairly stable equilibrium, the men are not long in mastering it. The *gufa*, however, is quite another matter. It is a slightly flattened ball of woven reeds covered with pitch, having a hole from five to ten feet

across at the top to receive passengers and freight. It is propelled by paddling, now on one side, now on the other, and two or three old hands can make very fair progress with it. A novice, however, can do little more than make the thing spin on its own axis. Moreover, he invariably renders himself still more helpless by laughing at his own uselessness ; and although some of the more serious-minded Sepoys have made considerable progress in handling the *gufa*, I am afraid we shall never be able to make Thomas Atkins, or his equally frivolous comrade-in-arms, the Ghurka, take it as other than a perpetual joke.

"A score of miles to the north of here, a few days ago, a dozen dismounted troopers, in lieu of anything better to hand, tried to cross a broad back channel of the Shat-el-Arab in a *gufa*, in order to dislodge some troublesome Turkish snipers. Their best efforts, however, served only to send the contrary craft bobbing down their own bank, the finest kind of a mark for the enemy's sharpshooters. The latter (I have this on the word of the sergeant whose misplaced enthusiasm was responsible for the trouble), evidently highly amused, held their fire until after the 'marines,' as they have since been dubbed by their comrades, had kicked a

hole in the bottom of the *gufa* and been compelled to take to the water. The few scattering shots fired even then were apparently sent only with the intent of 'shooing' several belligerent Tommies back to their own side, for the only casualty reported was the drowning of a man who, in the language of one of his surviving comrades, 'caught 'is bloomin' spur in the bally goofy an' got 'eld under water.'

"Which incident reminds me to say a word for our old friend, the Turk, as a sporting fighter. Of course, we knew all the time that he was a first-class offensive fighter and a superlative defensive one; but, because for years we have known him under such characterisations as 'The Terrible,'" and 'The Unspeakable,' we had come to expect from him a programme of 'frightfulness' quite in keeping with that of his allies of the Occident. That nothing of this character has been in evidence is one of the most refreshing surprises of the campaign. I can only set down here one of a number of instances in point which have fallen under my observation.

"You doubtless read in the papers that the Turks made an attempt in some force to recover Bassorah a few weeks ago, going by boats to Nasire, on the Euphrates, and marching from

there around the inundation area to approach this point from the west. Fortunately, one of our 'friends' sent us word of what was afoot, and we were able to prepare a proper reception at Shaiba. It was after we had beaten them back at this point, and while they were fighting rearguard actions in a most cleverly conducted retreat, that the incident I have in mind occurred. I was out with, though not in command of, a troop of cavalry which was pressing the pursuit a considerable distance ahead of our main force. About eleven o'clock in the morning we found our way blocked by a small detachment of the enemy which had been left to make a stand at an isolated *khan*, one of those walled desert halting-places of the caravanserai order,—really more of a fort than a tavern.

"There was no use in trying to dislodge the Turks until the guns came up, but, unluckily, about a dozen chaps, out of touch with their officer, attempted to rush the gate 'on their own.' The enemy coolly let them come on to about a hundred yards from the *khan*, and then, unmasking a machine-gun, dropped them all in a space not fifty feet square. A rifle volley brought down the three or four reckless spirits who, in spite of wounds, staggered to their feet and lurched ahead. Taking advantage of the cover

afforded by a pair of old canal banks, we managed to get up within about three hundred yards of the *khan* gate without exposing ourselves dangerously, there to wait for our field guns and to be ready to make it lively for our Turkish friends in case they tried to evacuate in the meantime.

"For a while we thought that, mercifully, no life remained in any of the still, sprawling brown figures in front of the *khan;* but presently, with his face covered with the dirt a sniper's bullet had thrown on it as he put his head up for a look, a man crawled back to report to Major S—— that he had seen a hand feebly raised as though trying to attract our attention. Verifying the truth of the statement at the risk of his big new *shikar* helmet, S—— promptly called for volunteers to try to bring the wounded man in. 'It's a slim chance,' he said, 'but this noonday sun would kill an unwounded man lying on his face for an hour out there. We've got to make the attempt.'

"Passing down the line, S—— picked the four spryest and wiriest looking of the sprawling row of grimy Tommies, each of whom had raised an appealing hand as the word for volunteers passed along. 'Make the best of the cover of that strip of date-palms, and bring in the man—he's the one nearest us—the same way,' he

ordered just about as he would have sent them out on patrol. 'We'll give the Turks what diversion we can in the meantime.'

"Then we began peppering the ports of the old *khan* in a blind and large sort of way that had little effect, as a consequence of the fact that the machine-gun fire which came in reply made it impossible to put our heads up to aim. Enough of a diversion was created, however, to allow the volunteers to make their way, apparently unobserved, to the farther end of the palm clump. But a hail of bullets met them as they left cover, and the last of them dropped while he was still a dozen yards from the object of his rush. The three first to fall lay still,—shot dead, as we learned later,—but the last one, in spite of a punctured femur, presently pulled himself together and began to crawl forward. It was not until this moment, I am certain, that the Turks fully comprehended what we were driving at; for now, although they continued to keep us under cover with sweeping jets from their machine-gun, not another shot was directed at the man on the ground. Nor was there any attempt to check his painful progress as he dragged the man he had been sent after back to the palm grove. Nor yet, finest of all, did the Turks try to wing a single one of another

brave four, who, disdaining the cover of the palm trunks, dashed out to relieve their comrade of his burden.

"Encouraged by the forbearance of the enemy, we were about to send out a squad under a white flag to see if any more of the wounded were alive, when dust clouds on the southern horizon warned the Turkish leader that our field-guns were coming up; and, with his task of delaying the pursuit well fulfilled, he made ready to retire by sweeping our cover with a fresh fusillade. The only gate of the *khan*, opening to the south, was completely covered from our position; but the resourceful Turk coolly breached the northern wall with a flake or two of gun-cotton, and, the first thing we knew, the whole troop—machine-gun and all—went scurrying off across the desert. For two or three minutes they were fair marks for us, and, as they sent several Parthian volleys themselves, there was no military reason why we should not have tried to bring down a few of them. As a matter of fact, we did send a few perfunctory volleys; but if its shooting on that occasion was any criterion of the marksmanship of S——'s troop, Allah have mercy on it when it comes to real grips with the Turk! Not one of the fugitives dropped from his saddle,

and I don't think one of them was hit. If we had done for even a man of them, imagine what our feelings would have been when, on taking possession of the *khan*, we found, hung carefully in a thick-walled crypt well beyond all danger from our rifle fire, three goatskins of clear, cold water, while scrawled on the wall, in both French and Turkish, was the direction, 'For the Wounded.' As we had been out of water for hours ourselves, and as a few cups sufficed for the two or three wounded who had survived the withering sun heat, you may surmise that our hostility toward the 'unspeakable Turk' was not materially increased by this latter incident.

"The chap who was rescued at so great a cost died a few hours later, but rather from exposure to the sun than from his wound, which was slight. The man who brought him in is well on the road to recovery and, I trust, a V.C."

IV

My next, and what proved to be my last, letter from F—— reached me in London :—

"Our general advance has begun, and we have attained our first important objective in the occupation of the 'Garden of Eden.' Not

the greater 'Garden of Eden,' which name Sir William Willcocks applies to all of Mesopotamia south of Hitt and Samara, but the traditional site of the Garden at the meeting of the Tigris and Euphrates. This was surely one of the strangest engagements in history. The country was under water for miles around, and the Turks had fortified and elected to make their stand on the only dry ground in the whole region, a series of low rises—hardly to be called hills—in the rear of Kurna. Fortunately, their available artillery was not powerful. We had prepared for the assault by emplacing batteries of heavy howitzers at every point sufficiently solid to support them, while lighter guns were mounted on the river-steamers and on barges.

"After a heavy shelling of the Turkish positions our troops, in everything from *balems* and *gufas* to *kaleks* and gunboats, were rowed, paddled, poled, and steamed forward to the limit of the draught of their respective craft. Then over they went into the water, and the assault commenced. Luckily the Turkish guns had been pretty well put out of action by our howitzers, else that half-mile or more through mud and water would have been a very costly business for us. As it was, some barges and *kaleks* with machine-guns on them were brought

up close to the enemies' lines, and, the fire of these and the gunboats having made the Turkish positions practically untenable, the troops had to do little more than go and round up a very sizeable bunch of prisoners who had been cut off by a swift flanking movement of a column of Sepoys. Some of our men, in their eagerness, went overboard into deep water, and, as a consequence, had to chuck their accoutrements and swim for it. A number of them, in fact, lost more than their arms ; and a bevy whom I saw later helping to shepherd some Turkish prisoners aboard a gunboat had little to differentiate them, sartorially, from Father Adam in the earliest days of this same 'Garden of Eden.'

"I had a rather interesting job a few days ago. This was to lead a small picked force across country and destroy a bridge of boats which the Turks were endeavouring to maintain across the Tigris at the Tomb of Ezra, for the use of any stragglers who might still be drifting back from the south.

"You recall the Bible story of this famous structure. The Prophet Ezra, faring about this region in his old age, feeling the hand of Death upon him, directed his followers to bind his body to a camel, drive the animal into the desert, and where it finally lay down to rest, there to make

the holy man's burial-place. The camel headed straight for the nearest reach of the Tigris, and there the brilliantly-tiled tomb which was reared above the Prophet's remains stands to this day, a mecca for Jews and Mohammedans alike.

"I didn't make a very brilliant success of my job with the bridge of boats. We got into a marsh in the darkness and waded about in it until too late to make the night surprise I had counted upon at Ezra's Tomb. We did get there at dawn, however, and, principally because the Turks must have thought we had strong support coming up, managed to induce the latter to evacuate his very good position about the Tomb and retire to the east bank of the river. We established ourselves in one of the Tomb gardens, but could go no farther for the moment on account of the brisk and accurate fire of the enemy from the other side.

"Most of the day I lay on my back in a bed of petunias under the garden wall, and gorged myself on the ripe pomegranates which the Turkish bullets cut down from the trees above. But about mid-afternoon they knocked a couple of bee-hives off the wall into the very midst of us, and, as we were wearing 'shorts,' with nothing to protect the leg from calf to knee,

the sequel was a very unpleasant one. So dead sure were those bees that our inoffensive little party was responsible for upsetting their homes that they divided themselves into just as many bands as we were men, and started, impartially and systematically, to sting us to death. My men were out of hand in an instant, and I really believe that, had not a modern miracle been wrought, another minute would have seen the whole pack of us, careless of such trifles as Turkish rifle and machine-gun fire, wallowing in the fifty-yard-distant Tigris.

"The miracle was performed by a little pink-cheeked, bare-footed angel of a Jewess, evidently the 'shepherd of the bees.' Unconcernedly tripping out among the writhing 'casualties,' oblivious alike to the threat of Turkish bullets and the roaring masses of bees, she set up the punctured hives in a safe place under the wall, and then began to beat sharply with a stick upon an old bronze gong which was suspended from her neck by a thong. Instantly the bees stopped stinging, and inside of five minutes the last of them was settling back with a contented buzz into its hive. I could have kissed the stubby brown toes of the pink-cheeked little angel of mercy. And here again let me record to the credit of the Turks

that, although her head and shoulders must have been visible to them above the low wall, they made no attempt to stop with a bullet the work which, had they only known it, was all that prevented the whole lot of us from falling into their hands.

"Every man of us was, of course, in beastly shape from the stings. My own agony from this source was infinitely worse than that from a bullet which ploughed up my scalp when we cut the bridge of boats after darkness had fallen; in fact, if the truth were known, I think the desperate pain all of the boys were in had a good deal to do with the absolute recklessness they displayed when the time came for us to try to fulfil our mission. I heard one chap tell another he was afraid that he *wasn't* going to get shot, and the whole bunch acted as if they felt the same way. Luckily, the Turks had no searchlight, and it is probable their own fire helped not a little in breaking up the bridge. At any rate, it went off down the yellow Tigris in a score of sections, and we—or what was left of us—with it. A half-dozen impetuous Turks who, in their eagerness to get at close quarters, had come out to welcome us half-way, were also carried along when the bridge broke up. After that it was a case of *sauve qui peut* for all

of us, and I'm sorry to say that only about a third of the force I started out with has, so far, straggled back to Kurna."

V

I was still chuckling over F——'s account of his experience with the bees when, opening the latest issue of the *Sphere* the following afternoon, I saw his familiar face smiling back at me from the corner of one of the first pages. "Been getting mentioned in dispatches," I said to myself; and then the title of the page, on which appeared a score of other portraits, met my eye: "Dead on the Field of Honour; Officers Killed in Action." There were no particulars, not even a date; nor was anything further to be learned behind the tape-bound portals of Whitehall. To the officers of F——'s regiment, now fighting in Flanders, some few details were ultimately vouchsafed; and from one of these, whom I encountered a few days ago, during his leave in London, I learned all that I have so far been able to gather concerning the death of my friend.

"F——'s work in cutting the bridge of boats across the Tigris," he said, "is spoken of as one of the most daring things of the Mesopotamian campaign. Undoubtedly he deserved a

V.C. for it, and it is just possible one may be awarded posthumously. He was slightly wounded there, but must have been out on duty again within a very few days. According to the account we have received, he was off on some special detail when he came upon a number of imbeciles of the transport trying to ferry several camels and machine-guns across a back channel of the Euphrates on a *kalek*, a sort of raft consisting of a light platform resting on inflated sheepskins. One of the camels had kicked a hole in the platform and was rapidly demolishing the supporting skins, when F——, fearing the loss of the guns, swam off to try and set things right. In endeavouring to extricate the camel, he ducked under the *kalek*, where, it seems likely, his wounded head was struck by one of the brute's sharp hoofs, and he let go his grip and sank before any one could get hold of him. Glorious death, wasn't it,—for a man who had led the life F—— had, and who, for that particular region, was the most nearly indispensable man with the expedition ? "

Two months have gone by since F——'s last letter was written, and the Mesopotamian campaign has been prosecuted along the general lines he forecasted at the outset. Nasire and

Amara have fallen, and the early winter will see the armies drawn up for the final fight for Bagdad, probably upon that same Plain of Shinar where the scarlet desert flowers still keep alive the old belief that

> Never blows so red
> The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled.

For destiny has decreed that once more the might of two rival races shall lock in death-grips for the possession of that age-old prize, the Garden of Eden. Eve was put without the gates when she tasted of the Forbidden Fruit, and right on down through the ages the same undeviating penalty has been inflicted upon the Babylonian, Mede, Assyrian, and other empires that gorged themselves upon the Forbidden Fruit of Corruption. Brave foeman that he is, the Turk, cloyed with the same Forbidden Fruit, has long been marked for the inexorable justice of the ages, and every precedent of tradition, history, and strategy points to the conclusion that the closing hour of his stewardship of the Garden of Eden is about to strike.

"IT'S A WAY THEY HAVE IN THE AIR CORPS"

I

It had been all of nine years since I first met Horne at an *estancia* house-party in the heart of the Argentine Pampas, and fully seven since I last saw him at a banquet given at the Buenos Aires Jockey Club in his honour, a day or two after he had led his four to victory in the finals of the River Plate polo championships. Yet, in spite of the pallor of a face I had always remembered as bronzed, and a slight hitch in his once swinging gait, I recognised him instantly —it was the keen, piercing glance, I think, and the sudden flash of white teeth in the quick smile—when he hailed me from a passing taxi and came hobbling back along the broad pavement of Whitehall to meet me.

"What does this mean?" I asked, indicating his jaunty Flying Corps uniform, after we had shaken hands. "I thought it was the army you were in before you resigned to become an opulent *estanciero* and 'man-about-the-Pampas.'"

"It was the army I came back to," he replied, "and I was with my old regiment at Neuve Chapelle when a fragment of hand-grenade effected a semi-solution of the continuity of one of my Achilles tendon and put a period on my further usefulness in that branch of the service. The 'air' was still open to me, however, and, as I had already dabbled in flying,—I was the first man to pilot an aeroplane across the Plate estuary,—I got a commission almost immediately, and so lost very little time."

"But your 'lily-white' face and hands," I pressed. "I never heard that the air had a bleaching effect on the complexion."

"Oh—that—" (Horne looked absently at a blue-veined hand and shuffled uneasily), "that must have come from my spell of 'C.H.'—confined in hospital. Got knocked up a bit again. Flying over Belgium. Got shot down and hit the edge of Holland a trifle too hard when I volplaned over the boundary. Telescoped a few vertebræ, that's all. Now, be a good chap and stop asking questions and jump in with me and come along to the Club."

Horne waited for me while I picked up a few promised figures at the "Lloyd-Georgery," as he facetiously called the new Ministry of Munitions in Whitehall Gardens, and then took me

up to one of the Service clubs in Piccadilly. There, without giving me further chance to "get him up into the air," he launched at once into news and reminiscence of the Plate and the Pampas. When I left him at six, we had talked for close on two hours without more than the most casual reference to events of the war.

"A keen patriot, like all the rest of these young Britons who have flocked home from overseas to fight for their country," I reflected as I sauntered down through Green Park; "but certainly not keen on his work." I even speculated as to whether or not Horne might be in some sort of trouble in the service. Nothing else seemed to account for the man's reticence regarding everything connected with his special activities.

A few days later Horne called me up to ask me to dine with him that evening at a famous old restaurant in the Strand.

"'S——'s' is a bit more 'merry and bright' than this old tomb of a Club," he said, "and a few of the Flying Corps chaps who are in the habit of rendezvousing there while in London on leave you'll find well worth knowing."

The gathering was even more informal than I had anticipated. One of the long tables, it appeared, was set aside for "R.F.C." officers and

their friends, and these dropped in by twos and threes, as suited their convenience, all the way from seven to ten o'clock.

There were half-a-dozen men at the table when Horne and I entered, and all of these—they had stalls for a new "revue"—presently took their leave. One of the group was a South African, one a New Zealander, and two Australians. The latter we found bent over the racing page of the Sydney *Bulletin*, while the New Zealander was evidently trying to persuade the Africander that a dairy herd near Wellington offered better prospects than a general farm in Rhodesia. One of the Australians, whose family was interested in an importing house, lingered behind a moment to ask me if I thought the war was going to force up the price of American agricultural machinery in foreign markets. None of them said a word about flying, and Horne volunteered no more than that they were all "good men—that little chap from New Zealand really 'topping.'"

Horne, with the fleshpots of Argentina in his mind, ordered solidly and lengthily, and three or four more officers had "wolfed" hasty meals of roast beef and whisky-and-soda before our *Chateaubriand* (which represents the nearest Anglo-French equivalent to the *carne asado* of

the Pampas) had been done to its proper turn over the coals. These, like the others, rattled on about the music-halls, the homeland, the "rotten London weather"—anything and everything, in fact, save the war in general and the war in the air in particular.

One, it is true,—he had come from France only that afternoon,—in accounting for a bandaged hand, did mention something about getting a finger jammed under the belt of his machine-gun; but it seemed to occur to no one to inquire what he had been shooting at, or whether or not he had hit it, or any of a dozen or so other things concerning which I, for one, was at once consumed with interest.

By nine all of those with theatre or other engagements had come and gone, and the eight or ten still seated at the table were leisurely diners with the evening on their hands. Yet not even among these unhurried ones was there evident any inclination to talk of their work. On the contrary, I fancied I discerned an inclination to avoid, to "side-step" it. When they were reminiscent, it was the friends and events of their old life—"trekking," "caravanning," "hiking," "mushing"; Arctic midnights and tropic dawns; strange odds and ends of adventure by land and sea—that they called up. And

when they spoke of the present, it was in connection with little happenings incident to their leaves—with the comparative merits of "kit" shops, Turkish baths, "revue" favourites, the pros and cons of drink restriction, and the extortionate charges of dentists.

Yet every man of them appeared true to what I have since come to recognise as a rapidly-developing type—the "Flying Type." The army aviator of to-day is picked for his quickness of mind and body, and the first thing that strikes you about him is a sort of feline, wound-up-spring alertness. Then you note his reticence, the cool reserve of a man whose lot it is to express himself in deeds rather than words. And lastly there is the quiet seriousness, verging almost on sadness, of the man who must hold himself ready to look Death between the eyes at any moment, and yet keep his mind detached for other things.

It was the youngest, and therefore the least "formed," officer of the lot—a lad who had left his cacao plantation in Trinidad to come home and fight—who was responsible for the only "shop" discussion of the evening. Noting that he was eating but little, and constantly passing his hand over his temples, some one asked him banteringly if he was "homesick or only love-sick."

"Neither," he answered, relaxing his set lips in a forced smile. "Had a bit of an accident yesterday, and have had a deuce of a headache ever since. Can't for the life of me make out whether it comes from going up too high or coming down too quick. I went up higher and came down faster than ever before in my experience. Landed all right, but ever since I've felt as though I were being blown up by a tire-pump that was driving air into every capillary and nerve-tip. My head feels as though some one was opening up a jack-screw inside of it. Suppose I should have gone to the hospital and found out what was wrong, but I didn't want to spoil my leave. Maybe some of you chaps can tell me why I feel as though I had to keep holding my head together to stop its flying to pieces," he concluded, pressing the heels of his hands to his temples to offset the seeming pressure from within.

Every one stopped talking and leaned forward with interest, and for an instant I thought the curtain was going to drop and reveal something of the experiences, if not the minds, of those khaki-clad sphinxes of the air. Horne's coldly professional diagnosis dashed the hope. "Altitude," he pronounced laconically. "Got over twelve thousand, didn't you? Over thirteen

thousand ? That accounts for it. And you went up wide-open, trying to take 'pride of place' away from a Fokker, I suppose ? Of course. And when you got there you began to feel like a deep-sea fish looks when you bring him up out of the kelp-beds and his own air-bladders blow him up ? A man can go up fifteen thousand feet by rail or on foot without more than a shortness of breath and occasional nose-bleed. But not every man—and not even every seasoned flyer—can stand jumping up to twelve thousand feet in the half-hour that some of the new machines can negotiate that height in. The difficulty's almost entirely physical, and it all depends upon how a man is made whether or not his flesh and blood will accommodate themselves to the suddenly reduced pressure of the atmosphere. There's no growing used to it. If it 'gets' you once, it's pretty sure to do it again. At the best you may only have a bad headache and a sort of 'boiled-owl' feeling for a week. At the worst you faint, lose control of your machine, and are listed among the casualties of 'cause unknown.' Did *you* lose control, by any chance ? "

"I think not," was the reply. "It was a second German machine—one that I hadn't seen —that brought me down. It came nose-diving

down out of a cloud, shaking its tail, and giving me a regular shower-bath of bullets—the usual Fokker trick. I'm almost positive I can remember all the way down. Fact is, with my machine in the shape that it was after its peppering, any 'lapse' on my part would have started it somersaulting at once. No. Rotten as I felt, I'm sure I kept 'connected up' mentally all the way down."

Horne shook his head dubiously. "You may be able to stick it," he said; "but before you try any more big-game shooting among the high places, best have a few practice flights in the upper empyrean. The sooner a man learns his altitude limit the better. There's plenty of useful work below twelve thousand feet for the man who begins to 'blow-up'—mentally or physically—above that height."

Conversation became general again even before Horne had finished speaking, for to most of them there was nothing new in what he was saying. None but the man on the left of the young West Indian ventured an inquiry as to the details of what had happened, and it was only by straining my ears that I was able to catch the drift of the low-voiced, almost monosyllabic exchange.

"Get your petrol tank?"

"No, for a wonder. Got about everything else, though. Propeller all chewed up; wings a pair of sieves. Bumped the bumps all the way down. Ground was about the softest thing I hit."

"Any one get the Hun?"

"None of us. Got himself, though. He came breezing out of a tuft of cirro-cumuli all of fifteen thousand feet up, and seemed to be going wild; sort of running amuck. Seemed to be trying to ram me when he nose-dived, and the reason he bored me so full of holes was that he didn't sheer off to give me a berth. Missed me by a hair, and almost upset me with his wind. But he never recovered from his dive. Just seemed to lose control and started going end over end. Fell almost into some of our trenches. I landed five miles away from the wreck of him with nothing shot up but my machine and my nerves."

"Any one get the first machine—the one you went up after?"

"No. It had the heels of all of us. The Hun's 'Archies'[1] brought down one of our machines that tried to follow it."

"Shop" interest waned at this juncture, and the conversation upon which I had been eavesdropping veered off *viâ* headache-remedies and

[1] Soldiers' slang for anti-aircraft guns.—THE EDITORS.

a pretty Scotch nurse at a hospital in France to the comparative merits of the "Empire" and "Alhambra" choruses; and I was able to turn both ears to Horne, who had been holding forth learnedly for some minutes on the points of the Andean pony-thoroughbred cross as a polo mount.

II

Our fellow diners drifted away as they had come—singly, and in twos and threes—and by ten o'clock Horne and I were alone in the deserted lounge with our cigars and coffee. He was expecting to be rung up at ten-thirty, he said, and as the time approached I could not help noticing that he became *distrait* and nervous, palpably anxious. The call came promptly, and it was with a look of ill-concealed apprehension on his face that he rose to follow the summoning flunkey to the telephone booth. A minute later he returned walking on air. Twice or thrice he tried to take up the dropped thread of Argentine reminiscence, finally giving it up as a bad job.

"I can't help telling you that I've just had some very good news," he exclaimed, with beaming face. "For six weeks now I have been haunted by a fear that that last jarring up I

got was going to put me out of the game for good. Yesterday I had the doctors go over me, and now, after being kept all day on tenter-hooks, comes word that, so far as flying is concerned, I'm going to be as right as rain. Nothing whatever likely to occur to prevent my going back in a fortnight. I think I must be just about the happiest man in London to-night. I——"

He checked himself with a deprecatory gesture. "Really, you'll have to pardon my outburst, old chap; but I wasn't half sure that I wasn't in line for invaliding out. Besides, I've been fairly itching to be 'up' all day. There's been witchery in the air ever since sunrise. I've never known more perfect flying weather. Which reminds me, by the way, that the Zepps are expected in this vicinity to-night. They were on the 'East Coast' last night, you know. It's just a little too clear for their purposes; but the air itself is perfect—*perfect*. There haven't been more than one or two other such days for flying as this one since the war began. You can't understand it till you've been in the air yourself. It was in the blood of all those chaps at dinner this evening. They talked about everything on earth except flying; and were thinking about nothing else but that. Didn't you notice that they were

as restive as the lions in the Zoo an hour before feeding time ? "

Throwing aside all reserve, Horne began to speak of his work—his love of it, the fascination of it, the great and increasingly important part it was playing in the war. This was precisely what, hoping against hope, I had been trying to draw him out on all the evening ; and so, lighting a fresh cigar, I sank back contentedly in my armchair to play the part of the appreciative auditor. Scarcely was I well settled, however, when Horne abruptly ceased speaking and leaned forward with his head cocked in an attitude of attentive listening.

" Did you hear that ? " he whispered ; " and that, and that ? "

" Nothing but the chatter of the first dribble of the supper crowd," I answered. " What is it ? "

" Bombs," was the reply ; " three or four of them. And, I think, gun-fire. The Zepps must be nearer London than they have been at any time since last October. Let's get down to the Embankment. We can see from there, if anywhere. They never wander far from the ' river road.' "

The Strand, packed with the crowds from the emptying theatres, was plainly oblivious and

unalarmed, and I promptly taxed Horne with letting either the wine or the "perfect air conditions" go to his head. He said nothing, but, all the way down the black little canyon of a street along which we threaded our way, appeared to be listening intently. Not until we were about to emerge into the brighter blankness of the Embankment did he speak again.

"There have been no more bombs," he said, "but I think the guns are going right along. If the sound is too faint for your 'unattuned' ear, perhaps the fact that you hear no shunting of trains or whistling at Charing Cross or Waterloo (you know of the new order which halts all trains during air-raids) will convince you that the Zepps are about. Or if not that, then come along here and have some ocular evidence. What do you say to that?" And Horne pointed off down past the looming mass of St. Paul's to where the stationary beam of a single searchlight laid low along the eastern horizon.

"I see the searchlight plainly enough," I said, "but where's the Zepp?"

"Take my glass," said Horne, handing me a small pair of semi-collapsible binoculars which was evidently a constant companion. "Now focus on that point of brighter glow, with a shadow behind it, half-way down the shaft—

right there, straight over the back of the right-hand lion at the foot of the Obelisk."

I did as directed, fairly to gasp with astonishment as a tiny blur, so indistinct as to go unnoticed by the passers-by on the Embankment, sharpened to a long, yellow-ribbed pencil, with pin-points of light—fireflies escorting a glow-worm—flashing out and disappearing above and below and round about it.

"The first Zepp to get over London in six months," I ejaculated excitedly. "How long will she take to get here? Hadn't we better get away from the river and under cover? But no," I went on, peering through the glass again; "I don't think she's coming this way. Seems to be standing still. Probably hovering over W——, the old objective."

"London! W——!" laughed Horne. "Do you realise that *you* didn't hear any bombs, and that none of these people have any idea that there's a raiding Zeppelin, with shells bursting about it, squarely in their range of vision? That fellow's all of twenty-five miles away, and as for its 'hovering,' you may rest assured that when you see a Zepp with incendiary shells bursting *above* it, it is either badly hit or else doing seventy miles an hour toward the home hangars. As a matter of fact, I've been expecting

to see this fellow begin to drop at any moment. He's evidently run into better guns and gunners than he counted on. Ah! No hope!" (Horne snatched his glass and turned it quickly on the now agitated searchlight beam.) "He's gone. Even the light's lost him."

Horne turned around disgustedly, led the way to a bench by the curb, pushed along a somnolent "match dame" to make room for him, and wearily sat down.

"He's slippery game—the Zepp," he observed presently, after watching the futile flounderings of the questing searchlight. "I didn't tell you, did I, that it was through trying to get a Zepp that I came that last cropper of mine over Belgium?"

"You know perfectly well you didn't," I replied, folding a corner of the old match-seller's straggling cloak back over her knees and sitting down in the space vacated. "Go to it."

"I was starting on a reconnaissance over a corner of Belgium just as the Zepp was returning from a raid over France. I got above him, and just after I dropped my first bomb the 'Archies' opened up on me from the ground and put me out at just about the first shot. Jolly nervy work, with my machine only a couple of hundred feet above the Zepp. A little too nervy, perhaps,

for I've never been quite certain in my own mind whether it was my bomb or one from the German guns which sent the Zepp—not wrecked but pretty badly messed up—down into a sugar-beet field. I headed——"

"Just a moment," I interrupted, anticipating the end of the tale at the end of Horne's next breath. "You're dumping over your story just the way a Zeppelin under fire dumps over its bombs. Now please back up and tell it properly. The night is young, the raiders are now headed out to sea, and the lady and I are here to follow you to the end."

III

Horne laughed uneasily, fumbled through his pockets in a vain search for matches, filched a box from the tilted tray of our nodding companion,—leaving a sixpence in its place,—lit his pipe, puffed pensively for a minute or two; and even after all that preparation made his beginning apologetic.

"I don't know that I've ever told the yarn from the beginning," he said, "and I'm dead sure I've never said much about the end. If I chatter a bit to-night, you'll please check it up against the good news I had a while ago—and the air. A man could pretty nearly walk on the

air as it has been to-day, and a machine would slide through it like tearing silk. Funny thing, but it was in the dawn following almost just such a night as this that I went off on the flight I have spoken of.

"There are three main factors in flying,"—Horne spoke more freely again as he digressed upon generalities,—"the man, the machine, and the atmosphere. Theoretically, man and machine are supposed to be sent out in perfect order, ready to take the air as they find it. There *are* days, of course, when you are 'off, your machine 'cranky,' and the air all 'heights' and 'hollows,' and at such times there is pretty sure to be a 'stormy passage,' if nothing worse. Usually, however, it's a fairly fit man and machine against indifferent air. But once or twice a year there comes a period, like the last eighteen hours, when the air is almost absolutely 'homogeneous,' and then, with his engine running 'sweet,' the man has spells of fancying himself an 'air god' in fact as well as in name, and acts accordingly, —invariably either to his own or his enemy's sorrow.

"It was like that on the morning I am telling you about—man, machine, and air all in harmony—yes, and with the usual result. I would have remembered this flight for several reasons,

even if the Zepp hadn't come along; for one, because of our ride down the wake of a '42' shell; for another, on account of the terrific shelling they gave, or tried to give us, as we passed over the German lines.

"The meeting with the shell was merely one of those freak experiences that might happen to any one, or, just as well, never happen at all. It was during the time I am speaking of that the Germans were amusing themselves by a long-distance bombardment of N—— with their biggest guns, and we—(I had an observation officer along, a chap named K——, whom you may have heard of as a long-distance runner)—simply chanced to meander into the path of one shell somewhere about the last quarter of its trajectory. Watching from a distance, you can always see one of these brutes go hurtling along, but this one we only heard,—and felt,—and it was like two express trains, going in opposite directions, passing at full speed. There was a strange soft sort of a buzz, growing into a rushing roar inside of two or three seconds, a blow from a solid wall of air that was like colliding with the side of a house, and then, for two or three minutes, a series of bumps like going over a corduroy road in a springless cart.

"I don't know whether we interfered very

much with the course of that shell, but the shell pretty nearly brought *our* flight to an end then and there. Only the fact that we met the first big rush of air head-on saved us. I wouldn't have had one chance in a thousand of 'correcting' if it had caught us sideways—and even as it was, the machine, in spite of its seventy-miles-an-hour headway, was stood up on its rudder like a rearing horse. After that first 'collision,' our fluttering flight down the wake of the '42' was only 'queer,' but withal a different sensation from anything I had ever experienced.

"I have no idea how close we passed to each-other. My impression of the moment was that the distance was inside of fifty yards, though it was doubtless really much greater. We were not, of course, going in exactly opposite directions, for the shell must have been coming down at a considerably greater angle than that at which we were going up. Yet the 'aerial surf' stirred up by the passage of the Hun's little messenger of goodwill in that smooth stretch of atmosphere was heavy and persistent enough to keep my machine wallowing for over a mile.

"The air was going by us in a swift, steady river as we neared the German lines, and I never

recall having been able to climb so quickly and easily. Lucky it was, too, for the enemy—probably in anticipation of a pursuit of their returning raiders—had their whole trench 'hinterland' planted with anti-aircraft guns, both stationary and movable. There was one little strip that blossomed out like a poppy garden as they opened up on us, and for a minute or so the smoke from the spreading shell-bursts formed a good-sized little cloud of its own. But they never had any real chance of getting us. My good little engine, singing like the wind in the telephone wires, had enabled me to get up over fourteen thousand feet without turning a hair and at that height you're a lot safer from shells in an aeroplane than from taxis in crossing the Strand. K—— was feeling the altitude a bit, I think; I saw him wiping blood from his nose and pressing his hands to his ears, but he gave no signs of real distress. As for myself, beyond a little swelling of the fingers and a drumming at the temples, I was quite as usual.

"We passed over the main 'bouquets' of the 'Archies' without even feeling the kick of the shells bursting beneath us; but in dropping down to ten thousand feet a few miles beyond, we encountered an unexpected 'plant' of them and the shrapnel bullets were flying all about us

for a minute or two. A score of neat little holes winked out in the wings, and one friendly bit of a bullet—spent, but still hot from its sharp flight—dropped gently into my lap and slightly singed the fold of my coat in which it found lodgment. Then we left that mare's nest behind and the going grew smoother once more.

"It was only a few minutes later, and before any beginning had been made on the work we had come for, that K—— picked up a Zepp through his glass and began reporting its progress to me over the telephone. At first it was flying very high, doubtless to keep above gun-fire in crossing our lines. Once over, however, it came down rapidly, probably, as K—— suggested, with the purpose of luring the pursuing aeroplanes into easy range of the German 'Archies.' If that was the plan, it was eminently successful; for K—— presently reported one of our 'chasers' falling in flames, another planing for our own lines, and two or three others turning back. I could see the marauder myself by this time, and noted that it appeared to be heading off about twenty-five degrees to the west of me, and flying already at a level considerably lower than the twelve thousand feet I had run up to in getting away from the last spasm of gun-fire.

"It was this commanding height, together

with the fact that my engine was running as sweetly as when it started, that determined me to take a hand in the game at this juncture. Still keeping well up, I promptly headed across to cut off the returning prodigal. For a minute or two the Zepp either didn't recognise me as 'enemy,' or else ignored me entirely. But presently a sharp speeding up of its engines was apparent, and for a moment I thought that it was going to challenge me for a climbing contest, generally a Zepp's first resort. But a few seconds later it had altered its course through nearly half a quadrant and headed off at top speed, at the same time beginning to descend at what I figured was about an angle of ten per cent., or five hundred feet to the mile. The ruse—to draw me down over some concealed line of 'Archies' in that direction—was plain as day; but I had three thousand feet of altitude to the good, power to burn, and, moreover, was bitten deep for the moment with that 'air-god' bug I have spoken of. It seemed as natural that I should chase Zepps as that a fox-terrier should chase chickens. Without further thought, I accepted the challenge and launched off in pursuit of the speeding 'sausage.'

"It really never occurred to me to discuss the thing with K——, but, like the trump he was,

he never showed by word or sign that tilting at airships had not been included in our orders. He, also, twigged the game at once.

"'Guns probably in that thick clump of trees by the little pond,' his far-away voice said over the telephone. 'Best catch him as far this side there as you can. One of his engines missing badly, and he's not going very fast.'

"With a quarter of an hour instead of a couple of minutes to work in, I would have preferred to keep along on a comparatively high level, and only descend, to drop my bombs, at an angle that would have kept me pretty well out of the range of the Zepp's guns. But K——'s warning was too sound to be disregarded and, in this case, the quickest way was also the only way. As it was, it was really almost a nose-dive, and I did the first half of it with the throttle wide open. So fast did we come up with the Zepp that it seemed almost as if a giant had taken the big gas-bag in his hand and thrown it at us.

"The patter of machine-gun bullets sounded only for a second or two—it wasn't unlike walking over a lawn-sprinkler—and, so far as I could see, did no harm. Then, cold as ice for the work in hand, I shot straight down along the yellow

spine of the airship, letting go a couple of bombs before my terrific speed carried me beyond my mark.

"Now a perfect torrent of shrapnel burst out around me—the smoke-tufts made the still distant clump of trees look like a cotton field—and almost at the same instant there was a strong rush of air from below. The machine teetered giddily on one wing-tip for a moment, and I just managed to right it in time to free a hand to grab the tail of K——'s coat as he, apparently unconscious, started to lurch over the side. I don't seem to have any very clear recollection of being able to get him back into his seat at all.

"I didn't have a chance for another good look at the Zepp; I only know that it descended rapidly, although apparently not entirely out of control. My machine, badly shot up as it was, still seemed to have a good deal of 'kick' left, though the reek of petrol in the air wasn't an encouraging indication that its 'vitality' would continue. The impetus of my descent quickly carried me out of range of that spiteful but isolated little battery of Archies'—luckily, too, in just the direction I wanted to go.

"Just before I flew over the Zepp—it was while the machine-gun bullets were still patter-

ing, I have since recalled—K—— 'phoned me the compass bearing of the nearest point of the Dutch boundary, and said something about it being our only chance if things went wrong. (That they had already 'gone wrong' with him he gave no hint.) Strangely, the figures had stuck in my head, and it was in that direction I sheered as soon as the machine was on an even keel again. It was not far, thank heaven, and, partly planing, partly under the power of that brave little half-fed engine, I somehow managed to keep up long enough to clear the top wire of the boundary fence and pile up in a heap in the hospitable silt of good old Holland."

A dozen questions tumbled after each other off the tip of my eager tongue, and the old "match dame," who had snored peacefully all through Horne's even narration, stirred and muttered petulantly at the unwonted disturbance. But Horne, rising and working his stiff joints, essayed to answer all in a single breath.

"I don't know how much harm was done to the Zepp, or whether it was I or the Hun's own 'Archies' that did it. K—— died in a Dutch hospital, without regaining full consciousness, two days later. (It was a bullet from one of the Zepp's machine-guns that did for him.) I can't tell you how I managed to get out of Holland;

and "—as a low whistle sounded from Charing Cross and a hooded eye peeped cautiously out of the black shed—"the trains are running again; so we may take it that the little visitor we were watching is now out over the North Sea and on its way home to bed. I think it's high time that we followed its good example on the latter score. Good-night and sweet dreams, mother." And he took my arm and began piloting me back to the Strand to waylay a taxi.

Horne has been back at work for a month now, and, so far as I have heard, with no recurrence of ill luck. Last week I met another friend from Argentina—a doctor, returned to "do his bit" with the Red Cross. "Horne has made a brilliant success of his flying," he said; "did he tell you anything of his exploits?"

"Only a little about a brush with a Zeppelin," I replied, "and scant details of that."

"That's all he has ever told any one. Yet the Dutch patrol swear that he came down in Holland with the tail of his half-dead observation officer's coat in his teeth (only thing that kept the chap from falling out); and there is also every reason to believe that it was his bombs that brought that Zepp down, and badly knocked up, too.

Either one of them would bring him anything from the Military Cross to the V.C. if he would tell even the plain, unvarnished tale of it. But the quixotic idiot made his report so confoundedly non-committal that there was simply nothing for his commander to go by. Was hardly enough to merit mention in dispatches the way it stood, much less to award a decoration on. Queer thing, but they say they've had the same sort of trouble with a number of the flying chaps. Seems to be a sort of cult with them. Can't say it's a wholly bad one, either."

SHARKS OF THE AIR

The sea raid, the land raid, the airship raid—this was the trio of bugaboos under the menace of which Britain, uninvaded, almost unthreatened, for a thousand years, stirred uneasily at the outbreak of the war and turned anxious eyes toward the leaden mist curtain which veiled the North Sea. Then the bulldog of the Navy after a tentative snap or two, set its teeth in an ever-tightening strangle-hold, and with the dying gasps of German sea-power the threat of the sea and land raids disappeared for good. So far as England was concerned, only the ways of the air were left open to Germany ; only the menace of the Zeppelin remained.

And when weeks had lengthened to months, and summer had given way to autumn, and autumn to winter, without the threatened bombing from the sky, the name of Zeppelin ceased to have interest for the stolid Briton, now just awakening to the fact that he had a mighty task to perform beyond the sea. Continued immunity bred contempt, and even the fore-running aids of the spring of 1915 failed to stir London

from her impassive calm. By midsummer she was showing signs of being bored with the whole subject, and the sky-searching antics of the comedians in her packed music halls began to be greeted with yawns from the stalls. She was becoming impatient of her darkened streets, and captious "Pro Bono Publicos" wrote to the papers demanding more illumination and a general return to "Business as Usual."

The "authorities" still kept up a pretence of preparedness. The so-called anti-aircraft guns —really a nondescript lot of ordnance, left over after the fittest of the few available pieces had been requisitioned for use in France, on the coast, or by the Navy—still had their crews of half-trained amateurs, and the golden beams of the searchlights continued to whirl and dip and curtsey in their nocturnal minuets. Buckets of water and boxes of sand stood ready for emergency use in the art galleries and museums, and on the hoardings conspicuous posters gave with meticulousp articularity instructions as to how one should act if Zeppelin bombs began raining in his vicinity. At the first sight of a hostile airship, we were told, we should repair at once to the nearest cellar, and in case a smarting sensation in the nostrils indicated the release of deleterious gas, the mouth and nose should be

covered with a moist double bandage containing a layer of carbonate of soda. Some of the pharmacies displayed patent anti-gas respirators in their windows, but none would admit ever having had an inquiry for one.

"We've got a war to fight. Zepps ain't war; fergit 'em." So a London bus conductor summed up the situation to me, and so seemed to feel the majority of his fellow townsmen of all classes.

Such, as regards Zeppelins, was the spirit of "London and the Eastern Counties"—to use the official phrase—as the summer of 1915 waxed and began to wane. Something of how this spirit met the trying events of the months which followed, I shall try to show by a few extracts from my journal. In deference to the wishes of the British Censorship the names of several points in London have been slightly altered.

I

On Board Yacht ———
en voyage,
Wroxham Broad to Hickling Broad.
August —.

We sailed and poled along the river and canal yesterday, and in the afternoon moored to the bank at this point, which is but a mile or two from the North Sea. The morning papers, which

we picked up as we passed through the little village of Potter Heigham, contained an official bulletin telling of a Zeppelin raid on the " Eastern Counties " the previous night ; and later in the day word was brought us that Lowestoft, the great trawlers' port about twenty miles to the south-east, had been heavily bombed. A second raid in this vicinity seemed, therefore, anything but likely.

The afternoon closed in one of those characteristic butterfly chases of sunshine and showers so familiar to the August *voyageur* on The Broads, and, lounging at ease on deck after dinner, we had watched the twilight aeroplane patrol, stencilled in black silhouette against the glowing western clouds, pass north from Yarmouth to meet its fellow from the Cromer hangars. A half-hour later the sharp staccato of its engine, rather than its blurred image against the paling afterglow, told us of its homeward flight.

It was a good two hours after the drumming of the aeroplane's engine had ceased to be heard that a strange new sound became audible, first distantly, in the puffs of the quickening night breeze, soon more imminent and with steady insistence. It was apparently the booming explosions of powerful gas engines, and presently, blending with this, could be distinguished

a buzzing clackity-clack that suggested whirring propellers.

"Another aeroplane," suggested one. "A fleet of aeroplanes," hazarded another. "A dirigible threshing-machine," opined a third. And, judging by the now almost overpowering rush of sound, the latter was nearest to the truth.

The whole universe seemed to have resolved itself into one mighty roar, and I distinctly recall that the mainsail halyard by which I steadied myself vibrated to the beat of the pulsating grind from above. For a moment—sensing rather than seeing—I was aware of a great black bulk blotting out the stars above the river, and then, stabbing the darkness like a flaming sword, the yellow flash of a search light leapt forth from the dusky void and ran in swift zigzags back and forth across the marshes and canals beneath. Now a herd of cows could be seen staggering dazedly to their feet, now the startled bridge-players on the deck of the house-boat moored above were revealed, and now our own eyes blinked blindly in the yellow glare before the questing shaft darted on down the river to spot-light an eel-fisher's shanty on the dyke and the gaunt frame of a towering Dutch windmill beyond.

Now it found the sharp right-angling bend of the river, quivered there for a second or two and then flashed out, leaving a blanker blackness behind. At almost the same instant the "Thing of Terror"—a hurtling mass of roaring engines and clattering propellers—shot by overhead, followed by a confused wake of conflicting air-currents. It passed straight down above the middle of the river at a height of not over 300 feet, and beneath the dimly guessed bulk of it bright chinks and squares of light, broken by the shadows of moving men, plotted the lines of two under-slung cars. A Zeppelin had passed almost within a stone's throw.

The lights of the car leaped sharply upward almost as soon as the bend of the river was reached, and at the end of a couple of minutes the roar of the engines dwindled to a distant buzz and died away completely. Ten minutes passed, during which the old eel-fisher went on stringing his traps across the river and the house-boaters resumed their interrupted bridge. Then a red signal light flashed out in the heavens in the direction of Yarmouth, and at almost the same moment, clear and sharp, came the sound of furious light-artillery fire. This lasted for only a minute or two, and there was another eight- or ten-minute interval before a still more

distant sound of gun-fire became faintly audible. Drowning the crack of these latest shots suddenly came the roll of a heavy boom, quickly to be followed by another, and another, and another, until a dozen or more had sounded. Then the peaceful silence of the early evening resumed its sway.

The eel-fisher finished sinking his traps before paddling up the gangway of the yacht and venturing a casual inquiry as to whether or not we had "chanct to see the Zepp." "'Er do this onct befoor," he chirruped. "'Er gets bearin's from 'e' riv'r an' then 'eds off fu No'ich o' Ya'muth. I be thinkin' if 'er knowed this grouse moor b'longed tu Ser Edderd Grey, 'er'd a bombed it good as 'er goed by."

This morning the London papers have the bulletin of still another raid on the "Eastern Counties," with a good many casualties; also an account of how a Zeppelin was brought down in the North Sea and destroyed by aeroplanes from Nieuport.

II

LONDON, *September* —.

Yesterday's papers had the usual account of an air raid on the "Eastern Counties," and during the day word was passed round that this

had consisted of an attempt to bomb the Woolwich Arsenal. This morning they have finally had to add " and London " to the regular formula, as last night, for the first time, bombs were dropped upon the heart of the city and seven million people watched the whole performance. It was the nearest thing to their promised " big raid " that the Germans have yet brought off, and to-day London—in the defence of the metropolitan area of which guns were fired for the first time in many hundreds of years—appears to have declared a sort of informal half-holiday to note the consequences.

To Londoners, a Zeppelin raid appears to be a good deal like the paradoxical " man-sitting-on-the-pin " joke—it is funniest to those who miss the point. To the ones in the swath of the raid, like the one who sits on the pin, it is anything but a laughing matter. " But the swath of the raid is so narrow, London so broad ; the killed so few, Londoners so many. If this is the worst the Huns can do, on with ' Business as Usual ! ' " There is no denying that this epitomises the spirit of London—even as it mourns its dead—on the morrow of the first great air raid of history. For myself, I must admit that I was rather too near the point of the pin,

and have since seen rather too many of the "pin-pricks," to be able to look at the diversion from quite the standpoint of the great majority.

Last night was clear, calm, and moonless—ideal Zeppelin conditions—and walking down from my hotel to the Coliseum at eight o'clock, I noticed that the searchlights were turning the dome of the sky into one great kaleidoscope with their weaving bands of brightness. The warming-up drill was over as I entered the music hall, and, returning home at the end of the "topliner's" act, I picked my precarious way by the light of the stars and the diffused halos of what had once been street lamps. I was in bed by a quarter to eleven, and it was but a few moments later that the distant but unmistakable boom of a bomb smote upon my unpillowed ear. I was at my east-facing window with a jump, and an instant later the opaque curtain of the night was being slashed to ribbons by the awakening searchlights.

For a minute or two, all of them seemed to be reeling blind and large across the empty heavens, and then, guided by the nearing explosions, one after another they veered off to the east and focussed in a great cone of light where two or three slender slivers of vivid brightness were

gliding nearer above the dim bulks of the domes and spires of the "City."

Swiftly, undeviatingly, relentlessly, these little pale yellow dabs came on, carrying with them, as by a sort of magnetic attraction, the tip of the cone formed by the converged beams of the searchlights. Nearer and louder sounded the detonations of the bombs. Now they burst in salvos of threes and fours; now singly at intervals, but with never more than a few seconds between. Always a splash of lurid light preceded the sound of the explosion, in most instances to be followed by the quick leap of flames against the skyline. Many of these fires died away quickly,—sometimes through lack of fuel, as in a stone-paved court; more often through being subdued by the firemen, scores of whose engines could be heard clanging through the streets,—others waxed bright and spread until the yellow shafts of the searchlights paled against the heightening glow of the eastern heavens.

The wooden clackity-clack of the raiders' propellers came to my ears at about the same moment that the sparkling trail of the fuse of an incendiary bomb against the loom of a familiar spire roughly located the van of the attack as now about half a mile distant. After

that, things happened so fast that my recollections, though photographically vivid, are somewhat disconnected. My last "calmly calculative" act was to measure one of the on-coming airships—then at about twenty-five degrees from directly overhead—between the thumb and forefinger of my outstretched right hand, these, extended to their utmost, framing the considerably foreshortened gas-bag with about a half-inch to spare.

Up to this moment, the almost undeviating line of flight pursued by the approaching Zeppelins appeared as likely to carry them on one side of my coign of vantage as the other; that is to say, they *seemed* not unlikely to be going to pass directly overhead. It was at this juncture, not unnaturally, that it occurred to me that the basement—for the next minute or two at least—would be vastly preferable, for any but observation purposes, to my top-floor window. Before I could translate this discretionary impulse into action, however, a small but brilliant light winked twice or thrice from below the leading airship, and a point or two of change was made in the course, with the possible purpose (it has since occurred to me) of swinging across the great group of conjoined railway termini a half-mile or so to the north. This

meant that the swath of the bombs would be cut at least a hundred yards to the north-east, and, impelled by the fascination of the unfolding spectacle, I remained at my window.

During the next half-minute the bombs fell singly at three- or four-second intervals. Then the blinking light flashed out under the leader again,—probably the order for "rapid fire,"—and immediately afterwards a number of sputtering fire-trails—not unlike the wakes of meteors—lengthened downward from beneath each of the two airships. (I might explain that I did not see more than two Zeppelins at any one time, though some have claimed to have seen three.)

Immediately following the release of the bombs, the lines of fire streamed in a forward curve, but from about halfway down their fall was almost perpendicular. As they neared the earth, the hiss of cloven air—similar to but not so high-keyed as the shriek of a shell—became audible, and a second or two later the flash of the explosion and the rolling boom were practically simultaneous.

Between eight and a dozen bombs fell in a length of five blocks, and at a distance of from one to three hundred yards from my window, the echoes of one explosion mingling with the burst of the next. Broken glass tinkled down

to the left and right, and a fragment of slate from the roof shattered upon my balcony. But the most remarkable phenomenon was the rush of air from, or rather to, the explosion. With each detonation I leaned forward instinctively and braced myself for a blow on the chest, and lo—it descended upon my back. The same mysterious force burst inward my half-latched door, and all down one side of the square curtains were streaming outward from open or broken windows. (I did not sit down and ponder the question at the moment, but the phenomenon is readily explained by the fact that, because the force of the explosives used in Zeppelin bombs is invariably exerted upwards, the air from the lower level is drawn in to fill the vacuum thus created. This also accounts for the fact that all of the window glass shattered by the raiders has fallen on the sidewalks instead of inside the rooms.)

Tremendous as was the spectacle of the long line of fires extending out of eyescope to the City and beyond, there is no denying that the dominating feature of the climax of the raid was the Zeppelins themselves. Emboldened perhaps, by the absence of gun-fire, these had slowed down for their parting salvo so as to be almost "hovering" when the bombs were

dropped opposite my vantage point. Brilliantly illuminated by the searchlights, whose beams wove about below them like the ribbons in a Maypole dance, the clean lines of their gaunt frameworks stood out like bas-reliefs in yellow wax. Every now and then one of them would lurch violently upward,—probably at the release of a heavy bomb,—but, controlled by rudders and planes, the movement had much of the easy power of the dart of a great fish. Indeed, there was strong suggestion of something strangely familiar in the lithe grace of those sleek yellow bodies, in the swift swayings and rightings, in the powerful guiding movements of those hinged "tails," and all at once the picture of a gaunt "man-eater" nosing his terribly purposeful way below the keel of a South-Sea pearler flashed to my mind, and the words "Sharks! Sharks of the air!" leaped to my lips.

While the marauders still floated with bare steerage-way in flaunting disdain, the inexplicably delayed firing order to the guns was flashed around, and—like a pack of dogs baying the moon, and with scarcely more effect—London's "air defence" came into action. Everything from machine-guns to three- and four-inchers,—not one in the lot built for anti-aircraft work,—belched forth the best it had. Up went the

bullets and shrapnel, and down they came again, down on the roofs and streets of London. Far, far below the contemptuous airships the little stars of bursting shrapnel spat forth their steel bullets in spiteful impotence, and back they rained on the tiles and cobbles.

Suddenly a gruffer growl burst forth from the yelping pack, as the gunners of some hitherto unleashed piece of ordnance received orders to join the attack. At the first shot a star-burst pricked the night in the rear of the second airship, and well on a line with it; a second exploded fairly above it; and then—all at once I was conscious that the searchlights were playing on a swelling cloud of white mist which was trailing away into the north-east. The Zeppelin had evidently taken a leaf from the book of the squid.

The tinkle of shrapnel bullets on the roof sent me down at this juncture to join the gathering of my fellow guests on the ground floor, where, on the manager's calling attention to the fact that my knees were shaking from the cold, I was glad to avail myself of the loan of his overcoat. I was not unappreciative of his delicacy in attributing the undeniable shiver in my frame to the cold, and I have not yet entirely made up my mind just to what extent the chill night

air, standing in a twisted and cramped position in order to look up, and sheer funk shared the responsibility for it.

I have been under shell-fire on several occasions, and I confess quite frankly that I never before felt anywhere near so "panicky" as during that long half-minute in which the airships appeared certain to pass directly overhead. The explanation of this, it seems to me, may be found in the fact that, in the trenches or in a fort which is under fire, one is among cool, determined, and often callous men who are meeting the expected as a part of the day's work, while in a Zeppelin raid one is more or less unconsciously affected by the unexpectedness of it, and by the very natural terror of the unhardened non-combatants. At any rate, to say that there was not a very contagious brand of terror "in the air" in the immediate vicinity of the swath of last night's raid would be to say something that was not true of my own neighbourhood.

As soon as the firing ceased I slipped into my street clothes and hurried out, reaching the "Square" perhaps ten minutes after the last bomb had fallen. That terror still brooded was evident from the white, anxious faces at street doors and basement gratings, but a mounting spirit was recorded in the gratuitous advice

shouted out by the "Boots" at a hotel entrance to a portly and not un-Teutonic-looking gentleman who went puffing under a street-light.

"No use hurryin', mister," chirped the young irrepressible. "Last Zepp fer Berlin's just pulled out."

At the end of a block my feet were crunching glass at every step, and a few moments later I was in the direct track of the raid. By a strange chance—it is impossible that it could have happened by intent—that last fierce rain of bombs had descended upon the one part of London where the hospitals stand thicker than in any other; and yet, while every one of these was windowless and scarred from explosions in streets and adjacent squares, not one appeared to have been hit. One large building devoted entirely to nervous disorders was a bedlam of hysteria, and the nurses are said to have had a terrible time in getting their patients in hand. From another, given over to infantile paralysis, hip-disease, and other ailments of children, came a pitiful chorus of wails in baby treble. The other hospitals, including one or two foreign ones, appeared to be proceeding quietly with their share of the work of succour, receiving and caring for the victims as fast as they could be hurried in.

The fires, except for a couple of wide glows in the direction of the City and a gay geyser of flame from a broken gas main in the next block, had disappeared as by magic, and most of the places where bombs had dropped in this vicinity could be located only by the little knots of people before the barred doors, or by following a line of hose from an engine.

Except for an occasional covered stretcher being borne out to a waiting ambulance, the killed and maimed were little in evidence ; and but for a chance encounter with a friend who was doing some sort of volunteer surgical work, I should have failed entirely to have an intimate glimpse of the grimmer side of the raid. I jostled him at a barrier where the crowd was being held back from a bombed tenement, and he pressed me into service forthwith.

" They are trying to uncover some kiddies on the second floor. Four of them—all in one room," he explained. " Two floors above smashed in on them. Everybody fagged out, and I'm after some brandy to buck 'em up. You're fresh. Take this armlet and tell the police at the door I sent you."

The little lettered khaki band passed me by the police cordon, and I found myself in the lantern-lighted hallway of a rickety brick build-

ing such as they erected as tenements in London thirty or forty years ago. Two blanket-covered bodies lay on the floor waiting to be removed to the morgue, and a third, hideously mangled, but still breathing, was being hastily bandaged by a doctor before sending on to the hospital. A dozen children were crying in a room which opened off the hall, and there, too, a hysterical woman in a nightgown, her face and hands streaming blood, was being restrained by a couple of uniformed police-women from rushing up the sagging stairway.

A fireman who had collapsed on the floor gave me his axe, and a special constable with a lantern guided me up the quaking stairs to a little back flat, where several men, distinguished by armlets as some kind of volunteers, were hacking away at the pile of *débris* which filled most of one of the rooms. Four children had been sleeping in that room, explained the policeman, and one of them had been heard whimpering a while back. There was no light but a lantern and a flash torch, he added, and every one was dead played out ; but just the same, they were going to stick to it as long as there was a chance that the " nipper " was alive.

This must have been somewhere around midnight, and it was by the first light of dawn

leaking in through the shattered beams and rafters that we reached the last of the little bruised bodies buried under the *débris*. The ghastly interval between was in many respects the most trying I have ever experienced. Somebody's strength, or nerves, or courage was giving way every few minutes, and there was one dreadful quarter hour during which we all had to knock off and help hold down the now stark-mad mother who had somehow escaped from the room below. For our reward we found that the youngest child was breathing, and might continue to do so, according to the doctor, for several hours. Its two brothers and its sister had mercifully been killed outright in the first crash.

Same day, 7.30 P.M.

I wrote the foregoing after a couple of hours of sleep; then went out and spent the rest of the day back-tracking the raiders. As the swath was largely cut through the tenement and slum districts of the East End, the property damage was not great, but, for the same reason, the loss of life must have been considerable. Pathetic little funerals—the kind one sees advertised on posters of enterprising Shoreditch and Whitechapel undertakers as costing two pounds ten shillings, with hearse and two carriages, with

an extra carriage added for an even three pounds —were to be seen here and there; but withal there was a remarkable absence of "hate" observable in the crowds that thronged from far and near to view the work of the nocturnal visitors from beyond the North Sea.

It is, indeed, well said that the Briton is a poor hater, and almost the only evidence that I could see of his being stirred by the events of last night was in the heightened activity of recruiting. The astute authorities, quick to see the advantage of taking the tide at flood, kept speakers—both civilians and soldiers—all day at the barriers where the crowds were held back in the vicinities of the points bombed, and many hitherto wavering volunteers were gathered in as a consequence. Here and there threatening crowds gathered in front of bakeries and butcher shops which bore German names; but their leaders were half-tipsy cockney dames whom the ever imperturbable "Bobbies" had no trouble in hustling on out of the way. No, stubborn fighter that he is, the Briton is only the most indifferent of haters.

III

From the time of the big raid, in early September, until the second week in October there

was not a single night on which the moon, wind, clouds, or some combination of meteorological conditions was not unfavourable to Zeppelin action, and it was not until this date that they tried to come again. Although rather nearer than before to two or three of the explosions, I had no such opportunity to view the progress of the raid as on the previous occasion, and this latest bombing is, perhaps, most memorable to me as having served to shake the monumental calm of two of the most famous and impressive of all London's institutions, the "Bobby" and the Frivolity chorus girl. I turn again to my journal.

LONDON, *October* —

I was at the Frivolity last night with my friend Captain J——, of the Royal Artillery, home from France on a week's leave, to see an oculist. About nine-thirty the nearing boom of heavy explosions heralded another Zeppelin attack. I started for the door at once, but J——, an old Londoner, pulled me down into my stall by the coat-tail, dryly observing that, right before us under the Frivolity footlights, there was transpiring an infinitely more epochal event than anything that could possibly be seen outside.

"We have had other Zeppelin raids," he

shouted close to my ear, to make himself heard above the uneasy bustle which filled the theatre as the bombs boomed more imminent, "but never before in history has man beheld the Frivolity chorus shaken from its traditional languor. But now look! They faint to left and right, and I'm jolly certain that M—— doesn't get her cue to embrace G—— until the next act. 'Pon my word, I never expected to live to see the waters of this fount of brides for the British peerage so disturbed." J——'s voice trailed off into wondering speechlessness.

"Boom!" This time it was close at hand, and the rattle of falling *débris* could be heard above the discordant wail of the mechanically labouring orchestra. Utterly unable to sit still any longer, I shook off J——'s restraining arm, and reached a side exit just as two bombs fell in quick succession, a hundred yards up the Avenue. Again I was conscious of those strange rushes of air from the "wrong" direction which I had experienced during the previous raid. The panes of the upper windows shivered to bits, but the fragments, striking the reinforced glass of the marquee, were robbed of their force before they had caromed to the sidewalk.

On both sides of the Avenue glass was falling in countless tons,—in one great corner building

alone 25,000 pounds of plate glass are estimated to have been shattered,—and there is no doubt that many were killed and injured by being caught under the vitreous avalanche.

Almost immediately three or four more bombs fell beyond the Avenue, there was another crescendo of falling glass, and then a lone Zeppelin—apparently at the end of its ammunition—headed up and off to the north-east pursued by a single searchlight beam and a scattering gun-fire.

The Frivolity chorus, having been soothed and revived, resumed its wonted demeanour and took up the dropped thread of the performance, and J——, no longer held a fascinated captor by the wonder of its lapse, joined me on the sidewalk to see what had been happening outside. It is a remarkable fact that the great majority of the audience, many of whom had not stirred from their seat, elected to remain and see the show out. From the three theatres opposite, however, one of which had been struck, considerable numbers were pouring forth. But not in all the now dense crowd in the Avenue were there the symptoms of a panic.

As we stepped from the curb something tinkled against my foot. Picking it up, it turned out to be a still warm piece of torn steel which

J—— identified at once as a fragment of the casing of an incendiary bomb. It was not over an eighth of an inch thick, but of such superlative quality that it rang like a silver bell even to the tap of a finger-nail. A far more murderous fragment of shivered metal, which J—— kicked into a few minutes later, was a piece of shrapnel casing, and there is no doubt that the casualties from anti-aircraft-gun projectiles are very considerable.

The police and fire department work was even more remarkable than in the September raid. Not a single tell-tale glow marked the path by which the Zeppelin had come, and the only fire in our immediate vicinity was the spout from another sundered gas main. Barriers already shut off the crowds from the points where the worst damage had been done, and the work of removing the dead and wounded was being carried on quickly and expeditiously.

A bomb falling in the Avenue midway between a motor bus and a taxi had taken a heavy toll of the passengers of both, while the two vehicles, still standing upright, had been flattened until their appearance was not unlike that of their respective "property" prototypes occasionally employed to give perspective to the stage-setting of a street. A dozen or more dead and wounded

lay in a row in front of a gin palace which had collapsed under a bomb; but, as far as we could see or learn, there had been little, if any, loss of life in the historic old theatre which had been struck.

A sinister coincidence had landed one bomb on a temporary wooden building occupied as Belgian Refugee headquarters. Miraculously however, although the rickety frame was blown quite out of shape, no fire was started among the small mountains of highly inflammable baggage on which the bomb exploded.

"The 'Uns ain't satisfied with wot they did to 'em in Belg'um," snorted an indignant coster, viewing the wreck; "the baby-killers 'ad to follow 'em to Lunnon." This was, I believe, about the nearest thing to "hate" that I heard expressed during the several hours we mingled with the crowds on the streets.

Faring on down the "bomb-track" into that historic section of Old London which lies to the east of the Avenue, we came upon an apparition quite as astounding to me as the spectacle of the "panicky" Frivolity girls had been to J——. It was nothing less than a London police constable, hatless, breathless, and so little master of himself that he was unable to respond with the customary "First to the right, second to

the left, and so on " formula when we asked him the way to the B—— Court, where we had heard there had been heavy damage. Slamming down on the pavement a heavy burden which he carried by a loop of wire, he began jabbering something to the effect that the " bloomin' pill " came down " 'arf a rod " from where he stood, and that orders called for the instant fetching of all " evidences " to the nearest station. I switched on my electric-torch—everybody here has carried them since the streets were darkened, —to recoil before the sight of the pear-shaped cone of dented steel toppled over on the cobbles at my feet.

" Good heavens, man, you've got an unexploded bomb ! " I gasped, backing against the wall. " What do you mean by slamming it around in that way ? "

" If she didn't go off after fallin' from the sky, I fancy she can stand a drop of a few inches," was the reply. " It isn't 'avin' 'er 'ere, sir, that gets my nerves. They went to pieces when she came down and bounced along the pavement in front of where I stood."

" Perhaps she has a time fuse, set to go off when she gets a crowd around her," said the irrepressible J—— by way of encouragement. " The Huns are adepts at just such forms

of subtlety. Better leave her alone for a spell."

Shaking in every limb, but still resolved to carry out "orders" to the last, the doughty chap slipped his bleeding fingers through the wire loop and trudged off on his way to the station, staggering under the weight of half a hundred pounds of "T.N.T." * That he reached there without mishap is evidenced by a flash-light in one of the "penny pictorials" this morning showing both him and his booty at the wicket of the B—— Street Police Station.

Two or three times during the next couple of hours searchlights flashed out to the east and south, and the blink of shrapnel bursting under barely defined patches of pale yellow indicated that the raid was an ambitious one, participated in by many airships. The heart of the city, however, was not reached again. I have it on good authority this morning that a number of bombs were exploded on the works at Woolwich, but, even if true, this only goes to show that Britain's great arsenal, if not less, is at least not more vulnerable than the non-military areas.

If possible, London took this latest raid even more calmly than the previous one, and the level-headed practicality of the remark of the

* Trinitrotoluol.

bus conductor I have quoted—"We've got a war to fight. Zepps ain't war ; fergit 'em ! "—may be taken as fairly representing the frame of mind in which the metropolis awaits the really frightful visitation that Germany has promised.

For three months following the October visitation there were no further air raids on England, and it was known that this immunity was due to one or more of four things : the strengthening of Britain's anti-aircraft defences, unfavourable weather, the efficacy of the Allies' reprisals on South German cities, or a dawning realisation on the part of Germany that the maximum physical damage which can possibly be inflicted on Great Britain by air raids can never be more than an insignificant fraction of the damage done to the Teutonic cause as a consequence of resorting to this form of terrorism.

As weeks lengthened to months without an attack—even though incessant reports from a score of sources told of feverish Zeppelin construction in all parts of the Kaiser's dominions—there awakened a hope in the breasts of Germany's enemies and her friends that the humanitarian consideration had been the moving one. This hope was rudely crushed by the mid-January aeroplane raid—evidently a scouting reconnais-

sance—upon Kent, and the renewed Zeppelin attacks on Paris and the Midland counties. Subject only to the weather, then, and to such defensive measures as may be taken in France and England, we now know that this least warranted and most cruel of all forms of Teutonic "frightfulness" may be expected to continue until the end of the war.

TO BRITISH MERCHANT CAPTAINS

All yesterday evening I came upon little knots of sailor men gathered along the quay or at the corners of the streets of Harwich and Dovercourt. Their weather-beaten parchment-brown faces were drawn and troubled, and they spoke in the jerkily lowered voices of men not wont to hold their tongues or passions in restraining leash. There was something in the half-stunned, half-angry looks suggestive of the expressions I had seen on the faces of the sailors at a North Wales port on the evening that a carelessly-framed despatch had tricked them into transient belief that the British Fleet had been beaten by the Germans in the North Sea. But I had been with naval men all afternoon, and knew that there was nothing fresh to report from behind the grey fog-curtain to the north. The trouble was of another kind, but from past experience I knew that the moment when the British sailor man spoke through clenched teeth in those jerkily lowered tones, with his brow corrugated in mahogany wrinkles of perturbation and his blue eyes fixed absently on the

fingers of his working hands, was not the one for even the most sympathetically curious to intrude upon him.

Enlightenment came later, when I asked the maid who lowered the shutters and drew the double curtains of my room in the little hotel on the Dovercourt cliff, why it was that the children playing in a narrow street that branched off diagonally below my window hushed their voices and tiptoed as they came down toward the seaward end, and why many of even belated and hurrying delivery carts were pulling up and taking another way on their clattering rounds.

"Is somebody sick?" I asked, "or is one of the neighbours dead?"

"Didn't you know, sir?" faltered the girl. "That is Captain Fryatt's 'ome down there. It's the little red-brick 'ouse—the fourth or fifth from the corner, sir. We all o' us 'ere knew 'im, sir, an' loved 'im; an'—you'll excuse me, sir" (her voice broke for a moment and the starting tears glistened in the flickering light of her candle)—"but I was thinkin' o' the missus an' the nippers. They's waitin' down there for more news from Belg'um. I hates to think o' 'em, sir. It makes me want to scream an'—an' to fight. I'll be going now, sir; it gets me all wrought up w'en I talks about it."

It came to me all at once what those stunned angry sailors on the street were talking of, and the hot wave of indignation—checked for an hour or two by the excitement of meeting and boarding a returning submarine—that had surged over me that afternoon when I first read the news of Captain Fryatt's execution in the paper, welled up anew inside me and throbbed against my temples. I was conscious of the passing of one of a class of men whom I had learned to know and love during many years of intimate association—in craft stout and frail, on seas fair and stormy—and the fact that the death of this man had been compassed with a cold-blooded cynicism scarcely paralleled in modern history brought the significance of it home to me with especial poignancy. In a dull sort of way I had been conscious of a similar feeling every time I had read of the loss of merchant officers and crews from the inauguration of the submarine campaign, but only now had I come to understand how much of a hold these same sailor men had on my affection, what parts they had played in scores of the vivid incidents of my life that I cared most to dwell upon in memory.

Three of the last ten years of my life had been spent upon the sea, I reflected, and of this time perhaps six months had been put in on one or

another of the "floating palaces" of the main tourist routes, and not more than that aboard ships under the German, French, Dutch, or American flag. That left a good two years—more than seven hundred days and nights—spent aboard the smaller British merchantmen—tramps, coasters, colliers, traders, flat-bottomed river stern-wheelers —in out-of-the-way water-lanes of the world.

Two years of my life—and what treasured years they were, too!—spent in the care of the bold, bluff, bronzed British merchant captains who drove "the swift shuttles of an Empire's loom." What strange seas they had steered me through, and what strange corners in the ports that served those seas! And what adventures they had run me into, and what scrapes got me out of! And what courtesy, what consideration —aye, even what tenderness in times of misadventure and sickness—had I not enjoyed at their hands!

Pulling on my cardigan jacket, I "stood-by" at the hour of one—midnight by the sun-time, by which the ships of the sea still sail—and at the instant when the steamers in the harbour would have been sounding "Eight bells" had there been no lurking Zeppelins to guard against, leaned out of the open window till the indrifting fog blew sharp against my face and began my "watch."

Just so—with a rough blue sleeve brushing against my own—had I leaned over the bridge or taffrail of a hundred steamers, ploughing a hundred sea-ways, and now, with the familiar breath of the sea in my nostrils and the familiar mist of the sea damping my hair again, old friends of other days strode down the corridors of memory and ranged themselves, one at a time, by my side. At first I tried to muster them chronologically, in the order I had known them from my first tentative coastal voyages in the Pacific—(B——, of the Vancouver-Seattle packet, who let me sleep on his cabin couch one night when the rooms were all taken in order that I might be rested for the tennis tournament I was engaging in at Tacoma on the morrow; R——, of the old Alaska "Inland Passage" coaster, who taught me to "box" the compass and awoke the slumbering love o' the sea in my blood with tales of the Victoria sealing fleet; P——, of the Mexican trader, who smuggled me out of Guaymas when the Sonora authorities were trying to arrest me for landing on Tiburon without a permit)—but presently the magnet of my quickened memory began drawing them forward out of turn, and ere long they were crowding on like guests at a reception.

Now I would think of the bravery of them,

and instantly a series of pictures took shape before my eyes, a score of names leapt to my lips, a score of hands—hard brown hands, with a world of warmth in their steady grip—reached out to clasp my own. Who was the bravest among men that had all been brave? I asked myself; and then how the pictures formed and dissolved as one stirring incident after another flashed across my mind! What could have been finer than the way Captain K——, of that cranky clipper-bowed old "C.N." steamer, had stuck out that typhoon off Taiwan, lashed to the bridge for three days, and subsisting on coffee and rum and pilot bread? I could see his brine-white face (as I saw it when I took a timid peep up the companion way on the day the "twister" began to die down) taking shape out there in the drifting fog even as the recollection of that fearsome storm crystallised in my memory, and then fancy turned another cog, and it was a sun-blistered South Pacific trader that I seemed to see, with a sallow, fever-wracked figure at the wheel, and two or three dozen naked blacks writhing in agony on the forrard deck. How old B——, of the *Cora Andrews*, took his load of plague-stricken Papuans through the Barrier Reef and into the quarantine station at Townsville is a South Sea epic.

Then came memories with a more personal touch, and I dwelt for a few moments over the shifting scenes of the mix-up I started the time I tried to take a flashlight of the smokers in the "Opium Den" of the old *Yo San*, plying on the Hongkong-Bangkok run. Some of the Chinese crew were smuggling opium that voyage, and, taking me for a Secret Service officer on search, started to wipe up the deck with my protesting anatomy. Curled round my camera under a bunk in the corner of the opium den, with nothing but the fact that my assailants were so numerous that they got in each other's way saving me from instant annihilation, and expecting every moment that one of them would gather his wits together sufficiently to pounce down on me through the slats, I cowered in terror, and was ever music sweeter than the raucous bellow of bluff old Captain G—— when, cursing like a pirate and banging right and left with the belaying pins he held in either hand, he ploughed his way into the den and yanked me out by the scruff of the neck. Poor old G——! he was lost with his ship two voyages later, when the ancient *Yo San* was piled up by a typhoon on the Tongking coast.

Then the recollection of the ignominious way in which old G—— had pulled me out from

under the bunk by the coat collar recalled the time when another British skipper—his command was only a "P.S.N.C." tender in Valparaiso, and I had long since forgotten his name—saved my life by handling me in quite the same unceremonious manner. The schooner on which I had planned to sail to Juan Fernandez had broken loose in a violent "Norther" and was fast driving before the mountainous swells upon the *malecon* or seawall, when the "Navigation Company's" tender, out to salve some drifting barges, came nosing cautiously in toward where the hollow waves were curling over into crashing breakers. The barges and their cargoes were probably worth more than our walty old hooker, but the skipper of the tender, noting only that there were lives to be saved on the latter, hesitated not an instant about deciding to try and stand-by. Unfortunately, we had a lot of German *colonistas* aboard, and the panic among them prevented many from the schooner being saved. I was one of the half-dozen who did not fail in their leaps for the tender's outreaching starboard bow, but my hold on the slippery rail was so precarious that only the mighty hand of the skipper on my neck prevented my slipping back into the sea. For a moment now, out in the drifting fog, I saw his round red face, under

its "sou'wester," just as I had peered up into it after he dragged me over the rail and slammed me down on the heeling deck.

At times memories crowded so that they became confused. I was not sure, for instance, whether it was T——, of the *Eimoo*, or P——, of the *Levuka*, whom I had seen go over the rail into shark-infested Rotrura Lagoon to jerk the kink out of an air-hose before his diver strangled; or which of two otherwise well-remembered "B.I." skippers it was that waded in, bare-handed, and floored every one of a bunch of Lascars who were fighting with their knives; or whether it was the mate or the skipper of the East African coaster who, with one of his thighs being torn to ribbons by the beast's hind claws, kept his grip on the throat of a young leopard that had slipped from its cage, and which he was afraid might become panic-stricken and jump overboard before it could be recaptured; or whether it was the captain of a "Burns, Philips" or a "Union" steamer that I had seen put out through the tortuous passage of Suva Bay when the wind was snapping the tops from the coconut palms, and the barometer was at 28.50 and still falling, just because the wife of the missionary on some obscure little bit of the Fijian Archipelago to the north was expecting

to become a mother and needed the attention of the ship's doctor.

I would have gone on to the end of my "watch" thinking of the bravery—moral and physical—the ready nerve and the general "sufficiency unto occasion" of my old friends, but most that had been brave had also been kind and considerate, and every now and then I found my mind occupied with recollections of the little things they had done for me, or that I had seen them do for others. There was B——, of the old *Changsha*, running from Yokohama to Sydney, who went miles off his course just to satisfy my whim to pass over the spot where *Mary Gloster* was buried at sea. What an afternoon that was! The Straits of Macassar "oily and treacly," just as Kipling had described them, and the milk-warm land breeze wafting the odours of the spice groves of Celebes. B—— had his volume of Kipling and I had mine, and between us was the reef-freckled chart of Macassar Straits with Borneo to starboard, Celebes to port, and a thousand dotted lines indicating islets and reefs and rocks—mostly lurking, half-submerged—in between.

"By the Little Paternosters, as you come to the Union Bank,
We dropped her—I think I told you—and I pricked it off where she sank—

(Tiny she looked on the grating—that oily, treacly sea—)
"Hundred and eighteen East, remember, and South just three.
Easy bearings to carry . . ."

read B——, running his finger along the chart. "Aye, easy to carry. *Here's* the spot," and he marked it with a circled dot. Then we "dead reckoned" the latitude from the noon sight, and "shot" for the longitude as we "came to the Union Bank." And finally, when we were over the spot as near as might be determined from hasty reckoning, nothing would do but B—— must start the lead going to determine the depth. Never shall I forget the way his face lit up when the leadsmen droned out "Fourteen," and there were tears glistening in his eyes as he turned back a couple of pages and read—

"And we dropped her in fourteen fathoms; I pricked it off where she sank."

"I might have known that Kipling worked it out with a chart," he exclaimed; "but what a thrill it gives one to find it exact, even to the soundings!"

The margins of "The *Mary Gloster*," in my "Seven Seas," bear the pencilled records—now thumbed and fingered into dim blurs—of our "mid-sea madness" to this day, and there

is nothing that I treasure more. B—— would never have taken his 5,000-ton freighter miles off her course, at the cost of some hours of time and a number of tons of good Nagasaki coal, had he been any less daft about Kipling than I was. But all British sailors love Kipling; as a class, I have always felt that they had a fuller appreciation of the message of "the uncrowned Laureate" than have any others.

For an hour at least I must have turned in fancy the pages of Kipling, now with this well-remembered skipper, now with that, until the recollection of how kind old N——, of a Liverpool Para-Manaos freighter, had read to me "The Hymn Before Action" one night when I was half delirious from the Amazon "black-water" fever he had been nursing me through set the current of my thought on another tack. N—— was only one of a dozen who had coddled me through some sort of tropical illness or patched me up after some sort of a smash-up.

It was R——, of the Valparaiso-Panama coaster, who had put my hand in splints after it had been crushed between the gangway and a dug-out full of ivory nuts off some pile-built village of Ecuador, and it was my fault rather than his that the little finger was still crooked. And it was H——, of the big White Star freighter

on the Australia-South Africa run, who laboured for an hour in helping the ship's doctor worry back into place the shoulder I had dislocated in the " sports " one afternoon ; and it was D——, of the Rangoon-Calcutta " B.I.," who had reduced with horse-liniment the ankle I had sprained in dodging out of the path of a temperamental water-buffalo while ashore at Akyab ; and it was A——, of the Lynch river boat plying from Basra to Bagdad, who stitched up my scalp after the Arabs of the bazaar of then almost unheard-of Kut-el-Amara had amused themselves with bouncing rocks off my head because (this was during the Turco-Italian war) they imagined I looked like an " alien enemy."

A—— was killed when the Turks shelled his ship—then a transport—early in the Mesopotamian operations, I remembered, and this led my thoughts off to the long watch I kept by the bedside of poor old Y——, on whose " B.P." steamer I had been roaming in and out among the Solomons, New Hebrides, Fijis and other islands of western Polynesia for two months. Y——'s heart had been giving out for a number of years, and now very hot weather following, the excitement of seeing his ship through an unusually heavy hurricane had hastened an end

long inevitable. He knew his "number was up," and so he told me, that night, of things he wanted me to explain and set right for him in Australia. It was the thinking of these, and the visit that I subsequently paid to his wife and children in the Illawara, that finally brought my mind back to that other bereaved family in the little red house beneath my window.

The short night had passed, the fog had lifted, and now in the early morning light I saw a milkman stop his cart a half-dozen doors from the Fryatt home and go softly tip-toeing on his near-by deliveries to avoid making unnecessary noise. Out of the retreating fog-bank to seaward two small freighters took sharpened line and headed for the harbour mouth. They were much of a size and type, but the gay red and white splashes on the bows of the more northerly ones indicated she sailed under the flag of an enterprising Scandinavian country, while the unbroken black of the side of the other told just as plainly that she was British. As I watched, the shifting of the shadows on the sides of the Norwegian told me that she was altering her course sharply every few hundred yards—"zigzagging" to minimise the danger from submarine attacks. A wise precaution, I told myself; now what about the other? I took up my glass and

held it on the Briton. One, two, three, four, five minutes passed. All the time the wave curled evenly back from her forefoot; not a ripple of shifting light or shadow told of deviation in her course of the fraction of a point.

"Straight on to your goal, little ship," I said, saluting with my glass.

But I might have known as much. That was Fryatt's way, and that was the way all my friends of the Red Ensign did, and always will do. "Good luck, fair weather and snug berths to you all; aye, and a quiet haven when the last watch, the long watch, is finally over!"

* * * * *

Knots of troubled sailor men still gathered along Harwich quay this morning, but now that I understood by what they were moved I no longer hesitated to mingle and talk with them. Their slow anger was steadily mounting—gradually crowding out all other feelings—with every word that was spoken, with every hour that passed; but among them were still men who were stunned and dazed, who could not understand how a thing so monstrous really could have happened.

"But w'y, w'y ha' the 'Uns done it?" persisted a grizzled old salt, turning his troubled

eyes to mine after all the others had shaken their heads perplexedly.

"It is just possible," I said, "that the Germans believe that the execution of one skipper who attempted to ram one of their submarines will make the others think twice before trying to do the same thing."

Two or three of the older men fairly snorted in their incredulity that even the Germans should thus cheaply rate the British sailor, but the plausibility of the theory soon convinced even these.

"Do you re'ly believe the 'Uns think that o' us?" one of them finally ventured.

"I do," I replied, "for there is nothing else to think."

The old man took a deep breath and turned his eyes away to sea. "God pity all 'Uns!" he muttered, and "God pity 'em!" "God pity 'em!" echoed his mates.

THE PASSING OF A ZEPPELIN

In the year that had gone by since the first great air-raid on London we knew that much had been done in the way of strengthening the defences. Just what had been done we did not, of course, and do not, know. We knew that there were more and better guns and search-lights, and probably greatly improved means of anticipating the coming of the raiders and of following and reporting their movements after they did come. At the same time we also knew that the latest Zeppelin had been greatly improved; that it was larger, faster, capable of ascending to a greater altitude, and probably able to stand more and heavier gun-fire than its prototype of a year ago. It seemed to be a question, therefore, of whether or not the guns could range the raiders, and, if so, do them any vital damage when they did hit them. The aeroplane was an unknown quantity, and, in the popular mind at least, not seriously reckoned with. London knew that the crucial test would not come until an airship tried again to pene-

trate to the heart of the metropolitan area, and awaited the result calmly if not quite indifferently.

The Zeppelin raids of the spring and early summer, numerous as they had been, had done a negligible amount of military damage and scarcely more to civil property. The death list, too, had, mercifully, been very low. It seemed significant, however, that the main London defences had been avoided during all of this time, indicating, apparently, that the raiders were reluctant to lift the lid of the Pandora's box that was laid out so temptingly before them for fear of the possible consequences. Twice or thrice, watching with my glasses after I had been awakened by distant bomb explosions or gunfire, I had seen a shell-pocketed airship draw back, as a yellow dog refuses the challenge that his intrusion has provoked, and glide off into the darkness of some safer area. "Would they try it again?" was the question Londoners asked themselves as the dark of the moon came round each month, and, except for the comparatively few who had had personal experience of the terror and death that follow the swath of an air-raider, most of them seemed rather anxious to have the matter put to the test.

Last night—just twelve "darks-of-the-moon"

after the first great raid of 1915—the test came. It was hardly a conclusive one, perhaps (though that may well have come before these lines find their way into print), but it was certainly highly illuminative. I write this on my return to London from viewing—twenty miles away—a tangled mass of wreckage and a heap of charred trunks that are all that remain of a Zeppelin and its crew which—whether by accident, intent, or the force of circumstances will probably never be known—rushed in where two others of its aerial sisters feared to fly, and paid the cost.

There was nothing of the surprise (to London, at least; as regards the ill-starred Zeppelin crew none can say) in last night's raid. The night grew more heavily overcast as the darkness deepened, and towards midnight stealthy little beams of hooded searchlights pirouetting on the eastern clouds told the home-wending Saturday night theatre crowd that, with the imminent approach of the raiders, London was lifting a corner of its mask of blackness and throwing out an open challenge to the enemy. This was the first time I had known the lights to precede the actual explosion of bombs, and the cool confidence of the thing suggested (as I heard one policeman tell another) that the defence had something " up their sleeves."

It was towards one in the morning when I finished my supper at a West End restaurant and started walking through the almost deserted streets to my hotel. London is anything but a bedlam after midnight, but the silence in the early hours of this morning was positively uncanny. Now, with the last of the 'buses gone and all trains stopped, only the muffled buzz of an occasional belated taxi—pushing on cautiously with hooded lights—broke the stillness.

Reaching my room I pulled on a sweater, ran up the curtain, laid my glass ready and seated myself at the window, the same window from which, a year ago, I had watched those two insolently contemptuous raiders sail across overhead and leave a blazing wake of death and destruction behind them. On that night, I reflected, I had felt the rush of air from the bombs, and—later—had watched the firemen extinguishing the flames and the ambulances carrying the wounded to the hospitals. Would it be like that to-night? I wondered (there was now no doubt that the raiders were near, for the searchlights had multiplied, and far to the south-east, though no detonations were audible, quick flashes told of scattering gun-fire), or would the defence have more of a word to say for itself this time? I looked to the eastern heavens

where the shifting clouds were now "polka-dotted" with the fluttering golden motes of a score of searchlights, and thought I had found my answer.

There was no wheeling and reeling of the lights in wide circles, as a year ago, but rather a steady persistent stabbing at the clouds, each one appearing to keep to an allotted area of its own. "Stabbing" expresses the action exactly, and it recalled to me an occasion, a month ago, when a "Tommy," who was showing me through some captured dug-outs on the Somme, illustrated, with bayonet thrusts, the manner in which they had originally searched for Germans hiding under the straw mattresses. There was nothing "panicky" in the work of the lights this time, but only the suggestion of methodical, ordered, relentless vigilance.

"Encouraging as a preliminary," I said to myself; "now" (for the night was electric with import) "for the main event!"

There was not long to wait. To the south-east the gun-flashes had increased in frequency, followed by mist-dulled blurs of brightness in the clouds that told of bursting shells. Suddenly, through a rift in the clouds, I saw a new kind of glare—the earthward-launched beam of an airship's searchlight groping for its target—but

the shifting mist-curtain intervened again even as one of the defending lights took up the challenge and flashed its own rapier ray in quick reply. Presently the muffled boom of bombs fleeted to my ears, and then the sharper rattle of a sudden gust of gun-fire. This was quickly followed by a confused roar of sound, evidently from many bombs dropped simultaneously or in quick succession, and I knew that one of two things had happened—either the raider had found its mark and was delivering "rapid fire," or the guns were making it so hot for the visitor that it had been compelled to dump its explosives and seek safety in flight. When a minute or more had gone by I felt sure that the latter had been scuttled, and that it was now only a question of which direction the flight was going to take.

Again the eastward searchlights gave me the answer. By twos and threes—I could not follow the order of the thing—the lights that had been "patrolling" the eastern sky moved over and took their station around a certain low-hanging cloud to the south. The murky sheet of cumulo-nimbus seemed to pale and dissolve in the concentrated rays, and then, right into the focus of golden glow formed by the dancing light motes, running wild and blind as a bull charges

the red mantle masking the matador, darted a huge Zeppelin.

Perhaps never before in all time has a single object been the centre of so blinding a glare. It seemed that the optic nerve must wither in so fierce a light, and certainly no unprotected eye could have opened to it. Dark glasses might have made it bearable, but could not possibly have resolved the earthward prospect into anything less than the heart of a fiery furnace. Indeed, it is very doubtful if the bewildered fugitive knew, in more than the most general way, where it was. Cut off by the guns to the south-east from retreat in that direction, but knowing that the North Sea and safety could be reached by driving to the north-east, it is more than probable that the harried raider found itself over the "Lion's Den" rather because it could not help it than by deliberate intent.

What a contrast was this blinded, reeling thing to those arrogantly purposeful raiders of a year ago! Supremely disdainful of gun and searchlight, these had prowled over London till the last of their bombs had been planted, and one of them had even circled back the better to see the ruin its passing had wrought. But *this* raider—far larger than its predecessors and

flying at over twice as great a height though it was—dashed on its erratic course as though pursued by the vengeful spirits of those its harpy sisters had bombed to death in their beds. If it still had bombs to drop its commander either had no time or no heart for the job. Never have I seen an inanimate thing typify terror—the terror that must have gripped the hearts of its palpably flustered (to judge by the airship's movements) crew—like that staggering helpless maverick of a Zeppelin, when it finally found itself clutched in the tentacles of the searchlights of the aerial defences of London.

All this time the weird, uncanny silence that brooded over the streets before I had come indoors held the city in its spell. The watching thousands—nay, millions—kept their excitement in leash, and the propeller of the raider—muffled by the mists intervening between the earth and the 12,000 feet at which it whirred—dulled to a drowsy drone. Into this tense silence the sudden fire of a hundred anti-aircraft guns—opening in unison as though at the pull of a single lanyard—cut in a blended roar like the Crack o' Doom ; indeed, though few among those hushed watching millions realised it, it *was* literally the Crack o' Doom that was sounding. For perhaps a minute or a minute and a half

the air was vibrant with the roar of hard-pumped guns and the shriek of speeding shell, the great sound from below drowning the sharper cracks from the steel-cold flashes in the upper air.

It was guns that were built for the job—not the hastily gathered and wholly inadequate artillery of a year ago—that were speaking now, and the voice was one of ordered, imperious authority. Range-finders had the marauder's altitude, and the information was being put at the disposal of guns that had the power to "deliver the goods" at that level. What a contrast the sequel was to that pitiful firing of the other raid! Only the opening shots were "shorts" or "wides" now, and ten seconds after the first gun a diamond-clear burst blinking out through a rift in the upper clouds told that the raider—to use a naval term—was "straddled," had shells exploding both above and below it. From that instant till the guns ceased to roar, seventy or eighty seconds later, the shells burst, lacing the air with golden glimmers, and meshed the flying raider in a fiery net.

For a few seconds it seemed to me that, close-woven as was the net of shell-bursts, the flashes came hardly as fast as the roar of the guns would seem to warrant, and I swept the heavens with my glasses in a search for other possible

targets. But no other raider was in sight; there was no other "nodal centre" of gun-fire and searchlights. Suddenly the reason for the apparent discrepancy was clear to me. The flashes I saw (except for a few of the shrapnel bullets they were releasing) were only the misses; the hits I could not see. The long-awaited test was at its crucial stage. Empty of bombs and with half of its fuel consumed, the raider was at the zenith of its flight, and yet the guns were ranging it with ease. It was now a question of how much shell-fire the Zeppelin could stand.

In spite of the fact that the airship—so far as I could see through my glasses—did not appear to slow down or to be perceptibly racked by the gun-fire, I have no doubt what the end would have been if the test could have been pressed to its conclusion in an open country. But bringing a burning Zeppelin down across three or four blocks of thickly settled London was hardly a thing the Air Defence desired to do if it could possibly be avoided. The plan was carried to its conclusion with the almost mathematical precision that marked the preliminary searchlight work and gunnery.

From the moment that it had burst into sight the raider had been emitting clouds of white gas to hide itself from the searchlights and guns,

while the plainly visible movements of its lateral planes seemed to indicate that it was making desperate efforts to climb still higher into the thinning upper air. Neither expedient was of much use. The swirling gas clouds might well have obscured a hovering airship, but never one that was rushing through the air at seventy miles an hour, while, far from increasing its altitude, there seemed to be a slight but steady loss from the moment the guns ceased until, two or three miles further along, it was hidden from sight for a minute by a low-hanging cloud. Undoubtedly the aim of the gunners had been to "hole," not to fire the marauder, and it must have been losing gas very rapidly even—as the climacteric moment of the attack approached—at the time increased buoyancy was most desirable.

The "massed" searchlights of London "let go" shortly after the gun-fire ceased, and now, as the raider came within their field, the more scattered lights of the northern suburbs wheeled up and "fastened on." The fugitive changed its course from north to north-easterly about this time, and the swelling clouds of vapour left behind presently cut off its foreshortened length entirely from my view. A heavy ground mist appeared to prevail beyond the heights to the

north, and in the diffused glow of the search-lights that strove to pierce this mask my glasses showed the ghostly shadows of flitting aero-planes—manœuvring for the death-thrust.

The ground mist (which did not, however, cover London proper) kept the full strength of the searchlights from the upper air, and it was in a sky of almost Stygian blackness that the final blow was sent home. The farmers of Hert-fordshire tell weird stories of the detonations of bursting bombs striking their fields, but all these sounds were absorbed in the twenty-mile air-cushion that was now interposed between my vantage point and the final scene of action.

Not a sound, not a shadow, heralded the flare of yellow light which suddenly flashed out in the north-eastern heavens and spread latitu-dinally until the whole body of a Zeppelin—no small object even at twenty miles—stood out in glowing incandescence. Then a great sheet of pink-white flame shot up, and in the ripples of rosy light which suffused the earth for scores of miles I could read the gilded lettering on my binoculars. This was undoubtedly the explosion of the ignited hydrogen of the main gas-bags, and immediately following it the great frame collapsed in the middle and began falling slowly toward the earth, burning now with a bright

yellow flame, above which the curl of black smoke was distinctly visible. A lurid burst of light—doubtless from the exploding petrol tanks —flared up as the flaming mass struck the earth, and half a minute later the night, save for the questing searchlights to east and south, was as black as ever again.

Then perhaps the strangest thing of all occurred. London began to cheer. I should have been prepared for it in Paris, or Rome, or Berlin, or even New York, but that the Briton— who of all men in the world most fears the sound of his own voice lifted in unrestrained jubilation —was really cheering, and in millions, was almost too much. I pinched my arm to be sure that I had not dozed away, and, lost in wonder, forgot for a minute or two the great drama just enacted.

Under my window half a dozen Australian "Tommies" were rending the air with "coo-ees" and dancing around a lamp-post, while all along the street, from doorways and windows, exultant shouting could be heard. For several blocks in all directions the cheers rang out loud and clear, distinctly recognisable as such; the sound of the millions of throats farther afield came only as a heavy rumbling hum. Perhaps since the dawn of creation the air has not

trembled with so strange a sound—a sound which, though entirely human in its origin, was still unhuman, unearthly, fantastic. Certainly never before in history—not even during the great volcanic eruptions—has so huge a number of people (the fall of the Zeppelin had been visible through a fifty- to seventy-five-mile radius in all directions, a region with probably from 10,000,000 to 15,000,000 inhabitants) been suddenly and intensely stirred by a single event.

It was undoubtedly the spectacularity of the unexpected *coup* that had made these normally repressed millions so suddenly and so violently vocal. Many—perhaps most—stopped cheering when they had had time to realise that a score of human beings were being burned to cinders in the heart of that flaming comet in the north-eastern heavens; others—I knew the only recently restored tenements where some of them were—must have shouted in all the grimmer exultation for that very realisation. I can hardly say yet which stirred me more deeply, the fall of the Zeppelin itself or that stupendous burst of feeling aroused by its fall.

* * * * *

By taxi, milk-cart, tram, and any other conveyance that offered, but mostly on foot, I

threaded highway and byway for the next four hours, and shortly after daybreak scrambled through the last of a dozen thorny hedgerows and found myself beside the still smouldering wreckage of the fallen raider. An orderly cordon of soldiers surrounding an acre of blackened and twisted metal, miles and miles of tangled wire, and a score or so of Flying Corps men already busily engaged loading the wreckage into waiting motor-lorries—that was about all there was to see. A ten-foot-square green tarpaulin covered all that could be gathered together of the airship's crew. Some of the fragments were readily recognisable as having once been the arms and legs and trunks of men ; others were not. A man at my elbow stood gazing at the pitiful heap for a space, his brow puckered in thought. Presently he turned to me, a grim light in his eye, and spoke.

" Do you know," he said, " that these " (indicating the charred stumps under the square of canvas) " have just recalled to me the words Count Zeppelin is reported to have used at a great mass meeting called in Berlin to press for a more rigorous prosecution of the war against England by air, for a further increase of frightfulness ? Leading two airship pilots to the front of the platform, he shouted to the crowd, ' Here

are two men who were over London last night!' And the assembled thousands, so the despatch said, roared their applause and clamoured that the Zeppelins be sent again and again until the arrogant Englanders were brought to their knees. Well"—he paused and drew a deep breath as his eyes returned to the heap of blackened fragments—" it appears that they *did* send the Zeppelins again—more than ever were sent before—and now it is *our* turn to be presented to 'the men who were over London last night.' I wonder if the flare that consumed these poor devils was bright enough to pierce the black night that has settled over Germany?"

* * * * *

The tenseness passed out of the night, and—the raid was over. Who knows but what, so far as the threat to England is concerned, the passing of *a* Zeppelin marked also the passing of *the* Zeppelin?

FIGHTING FOR SERBIA

I HAVE had many strange meetings—strange in place and attendant circumstance—in various and sundry odd corners of the world, but, everything considered, I am inclined to think my encounter with Radovitch, toward the end of last March, was the strangest of them all.

It was on the gorgeously flower-carpeted slope of a mountain-side in—— But let that transpire in its proper place.

There had been hint of gathering activity in the marching troops on the roads, and I knew that some kind of a skirmish was on from the scattering spatter of rifle-fire above and to my right; but that I had actually blundered in between the combatants was not evident until the staccato of a suddenly unmasked machine-gun broke out in the copse below. I did not hear the familiarly ingratiating swish of speeding bullets, and only an occasional twitching in the oak scrub told of a skirmishing soldier, but it was plain that if the rifles were firing in the direction of the machine-gun, and the machine-gun was firing in the direction of the rifles, the

position of my shivering anatomy came pretty near to blocking a portion of the restricted little neck of atmosphere along which the interchanged pellets must make their way. One never learns it until he is under fire—especially rifle-fire—for the first time, but the faculty for taking cover, for making oneself inconspicuous at the approach of real or fancied danger, is one of the few things in which the more or less degenerate human of the present day suffers the least in comparison with that fine and self-sufficient animal, his primitive ancestor.

I hurdled neatly over a natural "entanglement" of magenta-blossomed cactus, dived through a bosky tunnel in the gnarled oak scrub, and landed comfortably in the matted mass of soft maiden-hair where the water dripped from the side of a deep hole excavated by the village brick-makers in taking out clay. There was ample cover from anything but high-angle artillery fire on either side; so, picking out a bed of lush grass with a cornflower and buttercup pillow, I stretched in luxurious ease to let the battle blow over.

The rifles spat back at the woodpecker drum of the machine-gun for a minute or two, then quieted suddenly and gave way to the crashing of underbrush and the chesty 'tween-the-teeth

oaths that tell of charging men. Scatteringly, in ones and twos and threes, they began stumbling by above my head, now revealed by the quick silhouette of a set jaw and forward-flung shoulders, and now by the glint of a bobbing bayonet, but mostly by those guttural swear-words which mark the earnest man on business bent. One of them—a gaunt-eyed Serb in the faded horizon-blue uniform of a French *poilu*—who passed near enough to the rim of my refuge to allow of a three-quarters length glimpse of him, carried a squawking golden-hued hen by the feathers of her hackle, and I was just reflecting how every other soldier that I had ever known would have put a period on that tell-tale racket by extending his grip round the windpipe, when Radovitch came down to join me. Not that he had anything of the ulterior intention of seeking cover that brought me there—quite to the contrary, indeed. I saw him running hard and low (as every good soldier goes into grips with his foe), burst out of the thicket, saw him straighten up and try to swerve to the right as the hole suddenly yawned across his path, and, finally, saw the quick tautening of the scaly yellow loop of earth-running aloe root which deftly caught the toe of his shambling boot and defeated the manœuvre.

There was little of the fine finesse of my own soft landing in the whacking " kerplump " which completed the high dive executed by Radovitch after his contact with the aloe root. His gun out-dived him and cut short its parabola with the bayonet spiking a fern frond on the opposite bank, but his broad, bronzed Slavic face was the first part of Radovitch himself to reach the bottom, so that all the inertia of the bone and muscle in his firmly-knit frame was exerted in driving the ivory crescent of the teeth of his back-bent lower jaw in a swift, rough gouge through the yielding turf. He pulled himself together in a dazed sort of way, sat up, rubbed the grass out of his eyes, and kneaded gently the strained joints of his jaw to see that they were still swinging on their hinges. Reassured, he spat forth sputteringly asphodel and anemone and the rest of his mouthful of flower-bed, completing the operation by running an index finger around between the lower teeth and lip to remove lurking bits of earth and gravel.

There was something strangely familiar in that index-finger operation, and it was the sudden recollection that was the identical way in which we used to get rid of the gridiron clods that had been forced under our football nose-guards which was responsible for my fervent

ejaculation of surprise. I don't recall exactly what I said, but it was probably something akin to "I'll be blowed!"

The look of dazed resentment on Radovitch's grass- and dirt- stained face changed instantly to one of blank surprise. The poor strained jaw relaxed, and he turned on me a stare of open-eyed wonder.

"Where in 'ell d'you come from?" he gasped finally; and then, "You speak English?"

When, ignoring the former query, I grinned acquiescence to the latter, he came back with, "Ain't 'Merican, are you? Don't know New York, do you?"

On my admission of guilt on both charges, he crawled over and gripped my hand crushingly in his grimy paw.

"My name's Radovitch. 'Merican citizen myself," he said proudly. "Took out my last papers just 'fore I came over to fight for Serbia. Went to school five years in New York when I was a kid. Ever been in Chicago?'

"Of course."

Radovitch's excitement, increasing when he found I had been in Omaha (where he had worked in the stockyards), and Jerome, Arizona (where he had "dumped slag" in the copper smelter), reached its climax when I

assured him that I had once played a game of baseball at Aldridge, a little coal-mining town in Montana, near the northern portal of Yellowstone Park.

"I got a store there, and a half int'rest in the baseball grounds and a dance-hall." he cried; and he was just in the midst of an excited account of his rise to fortune in what he called the "hottest little ol' camp in the Yellowstone," when the din of two or three fresh machine-guns opening in unison drowned his voice, and a few minutes later a half-dozen rifle muzzles were poked over the edge of our refuge, while a gruff-voiced Serb corporal, in the khaki tunic of a British Tommy and the baggy breeches of a French Zouave, informed us that we were his prisoners.

Radovitch, with a sheepish grin on his face, threw up his hands with the classic cry of "Kamerad!" and then, shambling over opposite his captors, coolly bade them toss down a box of cigarettes for him and his "Merikansky" friend.

"Smashed mine when I fell," he explained, sauntering back and offering me a "Macedonia." "Wouldn't you reckon we'd had about enough fighting in Serbia without these d——d sham fights while we're supposed to be resting up here

in Corfu ? It may be all right for new recruits; but you'll have to admit that two years of the brand of scrapping we've been getting over yonder in those mountains is not going to put us on edge for play-fighting like this. But never mind, we'll be back to the real thing again in a month or two. Come on along down to the camp and meet my Colonel. We were kids together in Prilep. Now he's in command of three thousand men and I'm only a corporal; but just the same I could buy him out twenty times over."

The bare outline of Radovitch's story he told me that evening (after he had officially been "set free" again), as I trudged beside him across the hills to his camp; but it was not until he obtained an afternoon's leave three or four days later, and took me for a stroll through the Serbian Relief Camp, that I learned he had been one of that immortal band of heroes who, disdaining to take advantage of the open roads to the Adriatic or Macedonia after Belgrade fell, made their way to a mountain fastness in the heart of their own country and stayed behind to wage such warfare as they could on the hated invader. What sort of a warfare this was—indeed, what sort of a warfare it *is*, for the band still survives, making up in an unquenchable

spirit what it has lost in numbers—I then learned for the first time.

It was only the unexpected coming across a newly arrived comrade (suffering—and it looked to me, dying—from an open bayonet wound and an advanced and hitherto neglected attack of scurvy), that turned Radovitch from wistful reminiscence of Aldridge, Montana, and set him talking of the grim realities of the life he had been leading in Serbia, a subject on which I had found him strangely reticent up to that moment. The things he spoke of that afternoon covered only an incident or two of his life with a body of men who, steadily depleted and yet as steadily recruited from Heaven knows where, have furnished an example of bravery and devotion to an all but lost cause almost without a parallel even in a war in which bravery and devotion form the regular grist of the day's work.

Because this band in question, although its exploits are even now being sung of by the Serbs along with those of the half-legendary heroes of their early history, is still a "force in being," exercising in its sphere an influence of its own on the course of the war, it is necessary that the names of the villages and towns and mountains and valleys and rivers to which Radovitch so con-

stantly referred in his narrative should be entirely suppressed. I may say, however, that later inquiry which I made at Serbian Headquarters at Salonika revealed ample evidence that the things he told me of—as well as others scarcely less remarkable of which the time has not yet come to write—occurred beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The mood to talk did not seize Radovitch until after he had led me to the summit of the hill behind the Relief Camp, from which lofty vantage the eye roved eastward across a purple strait to the snow-capped peaks of Epirus and Albania, westward to where what was once the Kaiser's villa of Achilleon stood out sharply against the sombre green of the backbone ridge of the island, northward to where its twin castles flanked to right and left the white walls and red roofs of Corfu town, and southward to the dim outlines of Leukas and Cephalonia, thinning in the violet haze of late afternoon. Below, on three sides, was the sea, with the storied Isles of Ulysses bracing themselves against the flood-tide racing into the bay; above, a vault of cloudless sky, and round about a thousand-year-old forest of gnarled olives. It was the effect of all this, together with the sight of his friend from Serbia in the little tented hospital of the Relief

Camp, which set Radovitch talking of things I had been vainly trying to draw him out upon ever since I met him. While the mood lasted he seemed to need no other encouragement than the attentive listener so ready to hand; when it had passed he was back to the mines of Montana again, deaf and blind to my every attempt to make him talk of Serbia and what had befallen him there.

"How did your band get together in the first place?" I had asked, "and what sort of men was it made up of? Was there some kind of organisation before the retreat, or did you simply drift together afterwards?"

"It must have been mostly 'drift,'" replied Radovitch. "Probably the Government and our generals knew we'd have to give way when the Austrians and Bulgars together came at us, but none of the rest of us ever dreamed we couldn't wallop the whole bunch. So I don't think there is much truth in the yarn about the band of 'blood brothers' that had been formed in advance. We were about evenly made up at the start of men who wouldn't leave the country and men who couldn't leave the country. The first were mostly mountain men of the region we went to. There were a lot of ex-brigands among them, and most of them had

been fighting the Turk, or the Bulgar, or the Government, or each other, all their lives. It was to the way these fellows knew the country, and how to live off it and fight in it, that we owed most of our success. The rest of us were all sorts of odds and ends who had fallen out of the retreat but had still been able to keep out of enemy hands.

"At first this particular mountain region—which later became our stronghold, and is now the only part of Old Serbia in which the enemy has never set foot—was but a refuge, and for a few weeks we were pretty hard put to find enough to live on. It was touch and go for food all of the first winter, and we lived mostly by night raids on straggling Austrian supply trains. But before long we rounded up enough sheep and goats to keep us going, and in the spring got one of the little mountain valleys under cultivation. Since last summer—except for vegetables, which we had no luck with—food was one of our least troubles.

"We had plenty of rifles from the first. A Serb will drop his clothes before he will his gun, as you will find if you ever see our army in action where a river has to be forded. Many a man straggled in to us without pants or shirt, but never a one that I ever heard of without his rifle,

We were also tolerably well fixed for cartridges, because a man don't use one in raiding or fighting from ambush to a hundred he pots off in the trenches. We always managed to have enough for our own regular army rifles, and after we got well started raiding, Austrian rifles and munition came in faster than we ever had use for them. We could have done with an extra machine-gun or two before we had our stone-rolling defence organised, and before the Austrians had learned that it didn't pay to try and crawl in and pull us out of our holes. But before the winter was over we had enough spare 'spit-firers,' so that we didn't mind risking the loss of one or two by taking them along on raiding parties.

"The lay of the mountains made the whole *mesa* * just one big natural fort, and I miss my guess if in all the world there's another place of the same kind so easy to defend and so hard to attack. The mountains are steeper and rockier than that main range of Albania you see across there against the sky, and that's going some. I never struck anything half so rough in all the summers I put in prospecting in Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. Only one of the passes had a cart-road up to it, and only three had mule

* Table-land.

trails. At two or three other places a man could scramble up by using his hands, but everywhere else he would need to have ropes and scaling ladders.

"At every one of the passes—including the one of the cart-road — a half-dozen good rock-rollers, with plenty of 'ammunition,' could put the kibosh on an army, and you may bet we saw to it that there was no shortage of pebbles on hand. For the first week or two my fingers were worn pretty near to the bone from handling rocks. The only way the Austrians could have got the best of us, once we had made ourselves at home, would have been with not less than a dozen regiments of their Kaiser Jaeger, mountain batteries and all; but by the time this fact sunk into them the Italians were keeping them so busy that they probably figured they couldn't spare any such number of Alpine troops for side-shows. Anyhow, they never even gave us a good run for our money in the way of attacks, though of course some of the raiding parties came in for pretty bad punishings every now and then.

"The one thing that we needed most, first and last, was dynamite. If we could have got hold of even half a ton of it in the first month or two, before the Austrians got their patrols organised, we could have done no end of harm

in blowing up bridges and tunnels where they had been missed in the rush of the retreat, and upsetting communications generally. When we finally did begin to get hold of powder, all the danger-points were so heavily guarded that we never got a fair chance at them. Once, with fifty men armed with knives, we rushed the guard at an important bridge and cleaned up the lot before a shot was fired. But something must have been wrong with the fuse or caps, for the dynamite placed under the near abutment never exploded, and there wasn't time to go back and do the job over. The next time we tried the same tactics it was on a tunnel, but here they had an ambush ready, and only about a dozen of the hundred men who were in the raid ever came back. The smoothest piece of tunnel work ever brought off was not done by our gang at all, but by a much smaller one that worked in the region of Uskub for a while, led by a Serbian Intelligence Officer from Salonika who had been dropped there a month before from an aeroplane. They descended into a very important pass in broad daylight, seized a train of empty freight cars that was waiting on a siding for a south-bound troop-train to go by, held it until a signal arranged for in advance told them the troop-train was entering the

north end of the longest tunnel in that part of the country, and then turned the freight loose into the other end. We had word later that never a man was brought out alive, but the best effect of the job was its setting afire the lime rock in the heart of the mountain and the blocking of traffic for many months.

"This southern band—after recruiting up to over a thousand men at one time, and making life miserable for the Austrians for nearly four months—ran short of food in mid-winter and had to break up. Its leader, however, disguised as a Bulgar soldier, worked his way back through the enemy lines, and after just missing being potted by the first Serb patrol he ran into after crossing the Cerna, reached Salonika in safety with a complete report of what he had seen during five months in hostile territory. It was the slickest job of the kind that has been put through in this neck of the war. The guy's name is ——, and, unless he's off on another lay of the same kind, you can probably see him in Salonika.*

* Through the courtesy of the Crown Prince of Serbia, the writer, on his subsequent visit to Salonika, was granted an interview with the Intelligence Officer in question, and expects shortly to have permission to write a complete account of what was undoubtedly not only one of the most daring, but also one of the most successful exploits of the war.

"As I was telling you," resumed Radovitch, "dynamite was the one thing we felt the need of more than anything else, and yet—perhaps the one big thing we did wouldn't have been half so big (and maybe it would have failed completely) if we'd had the powder to go about the job the way we planned to do it in the first place. Did you ever hear what happened to the Austrian force that was camped in the —— Valley last spring?"

"I remember reading one of their bulletins," I replied, "which admitted losing a battalion or two in a flood in that region. But that was due to 'natural causes,' wasn't it? Didn't a broken dam have something to do with it?"

"Natural causes and a busted dam did have something to do with it," said Radovitch with a grin; "but nature in this case had some active assistance, and that was where we came in. It wasn't just a battalion that went down-stream, either; it was more like two of their big regiments—the whole of the main force they had shivvied together to bottle us up with. It was the best thing we did by a mile; and, as I told you, it wouldn't have been half the clean-up it was if we'd had in the first place the powder to do it in the 'regular way.' If we *had* had the powder, we'd never have given Providence

a chance, and, believe me, it was nothing but Providence that could have worked things round the way they finally came out.

"You see, it was this way," went on Radovitch, settling back comfortably and smiling the pleased smile of reminiscence that sits on the face of a man who recalls events in which he has taken keen pride and enjoyment, "the most open approach to our mountain country was by the gorge up which ran the cart-road. There was a good-sized area of watershed draining out this way, so that the little river running through the gorge was a pretty powerful stream even in low water—a good bit bigger than the old Firehole in Yellowstone Park. This river flowed out of the main mass of the mountains into a fine bowl of an uplands valley, and then on out of that, through a rough range of foothills, in another gorge. At the head of this last gorge is a natural site to store water, and there—as a project of an old Government reclamation scheme that had been held up halfway for lack of money to go on with—a high dam had been built which backed up a deep, narrow lake four or five miles long.

"The Austrians had a small force in the little village in the valley of the lake, and patrolled four or five miles of the cart-road into the moun-

tains, but the main lot of them were camped below the second gorge in an open, triangle-shaped valley that ran up from the plain to the foothills. It was a good, safe, healthy, well-drained camp, well above the top marks of spring high-water. The only threat to it was the lake behind the dam in the valley above, but, unluckily for them, they didn't know all the facts about that dam.

"The truth was that this dam was built to hold up a lake half again as deep as the one then there, but poor engineering and scamp contracting combined to make it too weak to stand the pressure up to the level intended. The English engineer who came to inspect it put a mark about two-thirds of the way up, and warned that it wouldn't be safe to ever let the water rise above that height. As a precaution, it had been the custom every February or March, before the spring thaw came, to drain off the water of the lake during the month or two before the run-off was the greatest, so that there was plenty of margin against the floods shoving up the level above the danger-point. The Austrians were good enough engineers to know that it was a rotten dam, but they didn't seem to have the sense to start lowering the water level before the spring freshets set in.

"Of course we didn't have to set up nights to figure what a break in the dam—if only it came sudden enough—would do to the main Austrian camp; but the contriving of ways and means to bring about that 'sudden break' seemed to have us guessing from the first. The simple and natural thing would have been to try and work down a couple of raiding parties on either side of the lake, rush the guards at the dam with knives (as we did later at the bridge I told you of), plant two or three charges of dynamite, touch off the fuses, and beat it back to the hills. If we'd had enough powder, probably that's the thing we'd have tried, but with what success it's hard to say. The chances against anything like a 'clean job' were anywhere from ten to fifty to one. In the first place, there was the chance of some of the raiders running into an Austrian patrol or sentry and starting something before they ever got near the dam. Then there was the chance that the rush at the dam might not go off quietly enough to keep from bringing the force in the village down on us and making it hopeless to try and place the powder, even if we had cleaned up the guards. Or, if we did get the powder placed, there was the chance that we might fail to explode it (as happened at the bridge); or even if it did explode,

it was no cinch that the dam would go all at once, or that the camp below wouldn't be warned in time to get clear. Yes, I'm sure it was a good fifty-to-one that one of these things would have upset the apple-cart if we'd happened to be in shape to try and do the job with dynamite. And once we'd showed our hand, of course, the Austrians had only to let the water out of the lake or move the lower camp, and the game was up for good.

"But the hundred or so sticks of forty per cent. 'giant' we had in stock were out of the question to tackle the job with, and so no move was made that might have stirred the enemy's suspicions of what we had in pickle for him. So, far from taking any precautions as the flood season approached, he only let the water go on rising in the lake and extended the main camp a hundred yards nearer the river. We talked over a hundred plans in the long winter nights, but it was not till the snow began to turn slushy at noonday, along towards the middle of March, that we hit on one that seemed to promise a chance of success.

"We had been hoping all along that the Austrians might let the water go on piling up behind the dam until it gave way, but it was not till one day when our scouts brought word

that the gates had now been opened, with the evident intention of holding the lake at a level which they figured at about ten feet above the danger-point, that it occurred to us that we might do something to help the good work along. Nobody ever recalled afterwards whose idea it was, but a dozen of us—officers and men together, in the Serbian fashion—suddenly found ourselves waving our arms and getting red in the face discussing a plan for building a little dam of our own, backing up as big a lakeful of water behind it as we could, and then turning it loose on the big lake below at the crest of the spring floods. If any of us had had any engineering sense we'd have known that we couldn't build—with no tools but a few axes and spades, and no materials but what nature had put there—a dam in a year big enough to be of any use, let alone in a month. But having no sense to speak of in things of that kind, we went ahead with the job, and, with the luck of fools, pulled it off.

"There was a fine site for a dam at the upper end of the cart-road gorge, where it looked as though a solid barrier thirty feet high would back up a lake something like three-quarters of a mile long and from a quarter to half a mile wide. We began by building a 'crib' of pine-trunks thirty feet wide—which was to be filled

with boulders and gravel. On our pencil plan of it, it was to be heavily buttressed from below and slope from both sides till it was only ten feet wide at the top. Our idea was to make it as much like a fort as possible, so that if the Austrians piped it off from an aeroplane they would think we were only working on defences. A hole was to be left in the middle for the river to flow out through, as we didn't intend to store water till the big rains and thaws set in. As it was rainy or windy every day from the time we started to work, the Austrians—as far as we ever knew—did no flying over the mountains, so that we had no worry on that score.

"Upwards of five hundred husky Serbs can do a deal of work, but it didn't take more than three days of log-rolling and rock-packing to show that—even at the pace we were hitting it—that hundred-yard-long, thirty-feet-high dam wouldn't be finished before the next season, and that, even if we did get it done some time, the stuff we were putting in it was too loose to stop water. It was at this stage of things that I had *my* big idea. I had worked in hydraulic mines in the West, and while we had nothing to rig up a pipe and nozzle from, there *was* a chance to divert a little mountain torrent that came tumbling down from the snows only a few yards

below our dam site. Why not, I suggested, build up only a narrow crib of boulders and pine logs to act as a barrier, and then bring over this little torrent—it was flowing about a hundred miner's inches at this time—and let it sluice down the loose 'conglomerate' from the four-hundred-foot-high cliff through which it flowed? Because no one had anything else to offer, we decided to try the thing.

"We used up a good half of our poor little store of powder in making the cut to bring over the stream, but the job was mostly easy digging, and we finished it in three days. My young 'hydraulic' sure tore down a lot of rock and gravel, but, as we couldn't rig up anything to confine it properly, it only spread out in a big 'fan,' which in turn was sluiced away by the river. That fairly stumped us, and when on top of it a big storm came on and brought down a flood that washed away all our cribbing, we chucked up in disgust our project of 'harnessing nature' against the Austrian and began to plan raids again.

"All that night it rained cats and dogs, and when I looked out of my hut the next morning the river was over its banks and humping it like a 'locoed' mustang. But the funny thing was that the cascade from the little stream we had

diverted seemed to have disappeared. At first I thought it had bucked its way back into its old channel, but when I went down to look I found that it had been 'swallowed' up by the cliff. Five times as big as on the night before, it came tumbling down over an up-ended stratum of slate, to disappear in a foamy yellow-white spout into a deep crack it had sluiced into the soft 'conglomerate.' At the bottom of the cliff it came boiling out from under the angling slate-layer in a stream that looked to be about equal parts of gravel and water. My baby 'hydraulic' had evidently undermined a sloping section of the cliff for a hundred feet or more, and only the tough slate stratum was staving off a big cave-in. How big a cave-in it was going to be, and what it was going to lead to, I never guessed.

"The warm rain kept plugging down all day, and was still pelting hard when I went to sleep that night. Towards morning I was waked up with a roar a hundred times louder than any snow-slide I ever heard, and then came a jar that rocked the whole valley. I felt sure a piece of the cliff had come down, but didn't have the least hunch that anything like what the first daylight showed up had come off. The first thing I saw as the dark slacked off was the

shimmer of a flat stretch of water in the bottom of the valley, a lake—just as if it had been dropped from the sky—right where we'd been trying to start one ourselves.

"The cliff had broken back a couple of hundred feet or more all the way to the top, and in falling had piled up clear across the head of the gorge. On the near side it was about one hundred and fifty feet high, on the farther side something like sixty.

"With the rain still pouring pitchforks and the snow melting all over the mountains, water was coming down at a rate that had the lake rising at the rate of two feet an hour all morning, and better than half that fast even when it began to spread out over the valley floor in the afternoon. The storm kept right on for three days. The second morning there was twenty-five feet of water at the dam, on the third forty feet and on the fourth near to fifty. The lake by this time was both bigger and deeper than the one we'd planned to make ourselves.

"By good luck the streams ramping down from the mountains into the gorge below the slide kept two or three times its average flow in the river, and so the Austrians—who didn't know its habits very well—failed to notice that anything unusual had come off up-stream. Our

scouts reported that the water in the lower lake had not risen much, and that it seemed to stand at about fifteen feet above the danger mark. The Austrians, they said, did not appear to be paying any more attention to the dam than usual.

"We were hoping that the storm would hold until enough water was backed up to bust the dam on its own, but when it began to clear on the fourth day it was plain the best way out of it was to give the thing a push on our own account. We didn't have a hundredth of enough 'giant' to do the job, so had to rig the best makeshift we could by turning the still husky stream of my 'hydraulic' right along the sloping top of the slide and off down into the gorge.

"It was about midday when we set it sluicing, and all afternoon it licked off the loose earth as if it was sugar. By dark half the near end of the slide had slushed away, and the wall that still held was beginning to bulge and cave with the seep forced through from the other side. Half an hour later our pitch-pine torches showed the water bubbling through all the way along, and we knew it was time for us to clear out. It was none too soon either, for the last man was just out of the way when a heavy sort of

rolling-grind started, and then—whouf!—out she went.

"I've been in 'Yankee Jim's' Canyon of the Yellowstone when the flood behind the break-up of the ice-jam in the lake came down, but that was a rat-a-tat to the roar that sounded now. The mountains themselves were shaking, and the movement started the 'hanging' snow-slides all the way down the gorge. It must have been a racket like that when the world was made. The lake was drained of all but mud in ten minutes, and it must have been about twice that long before a new sound broke in—a roar so deep that it seemed to almost be a rumbling from under the earth. But we knew that it was the big dam going—that our work was done for that night.

"The next morning at daybreak every man in shape to stand the climb over a mountain path we knew—the road down the gorge had been scoured out clean—dropped down from three sides on the little Austrian force in the village where the dam had been, and killed or captured the whole bunch. Then we pushed on to the top of the foothills looking down to the plain. Where the main Austrian camp had been was a slither of smooth mud, dotted with the stumps of snapped-off trees; and just that,

and no more, was all we could see as far as our eyes could reach.

"And just so," cried Radovitch, leaping to his feet and shaking a fist toward the serrated sky-line to the north-east, beyond which ran the roads to Monastir and Prilep and Uskub; "just so, when the time comes, will the whole —— —— herd of the swine be swept out of Serbia!"

BEATING BACK FROM GERMANY

(As Told by an Escaped Prisoner).

I was born on a Wisconsin farm, almost within sight of Lake Michigan and only a few miles from the Illinois State line. My father was Irish and my mother German. Like my name, most of my qualities—both good and bad—were those of my father rather than my mother. He died when I was ten, and within a year my mother married our German hired-man. My mother was never unkind to me, but my stepfather was a brute, and from the day of his coming to live with us I date a steadily growing dislike for his race, which has been made worse by a sort of fatality which, in spite of myself, has seemed to work to throw me amongst them all my life.

My stepfather was always rough with me, but until I was sixteen confined himself to a black-snake and horsewhip in beating me. I got on as best I could with him, but when he celebrated my coming to what he called " man's estate " by starting in on me with a hoe-handle, it was more than I could stand. The second

time he tried it I was ready for him and caught him a blow behind the ear with an iron monkey-wrench that laid him out across the chopping-block. Afraid that I had killed him—he was really not hurt much—I ran away, taking nothing with me but the wrench I had in my hand. I never parted with that good old monkey-wrench during all my wanderings of the next ten years, and I felt worse about losing it to the Germans in Flanders than I did about the two fingers their shrapnel bashed off.

For the next few years I did all kinds of farm work, always being employed by Germans because nearly all of the farms in southern Wisconsin are owned by those people. Possibly there were many good people amongst them, but it always seemed to be my luck to get with the others. Hard workers themselves, they were also hard drivers of those who worked for them, and full of mean little tricks for getting more time out of you or for giving you less money. Of course, being quick-tempered and with a sort of standing grudge against all "square-heads" growing up inside of me anyhow, I was in hot water most of the time. The week that went by without a fight was very exceptional. If they were content to go after me with their fists, I usually kept to the same weapons, and hardly

recall a time when I didn't have the best of it. But if they ever tried anything else I always fell back on my trusty monkey-wrench, which I generally carried swung to my belt with a raw-hide. After a while, just as the Indians used to tally their scalps on the handles of their tomahawks, I started cutting a notch on the wooden grip of my monkey-wrench for every time I had dropped—I don't think I ever killed one—a " square-head " with it. At first—proud of what they stood for—I cut them broad and long, but soon I saw I was using up my limited space too fast, and, to provide for " future developments," began cutting them smaller. It was surprising how much the notches improved the grip.

By the time I was twenty I was able to run both the engine and the separator of a threshing-machine outfit, and started going west every summer to the Dakotas and Montana to get the benefit of the high harvest pay. My winters I spent in a big factory in Racine, learning to repair and build threshers and tractors. Partly to save the money that I would have had to pay for a ticket, but more for the lark of it, I started beating my way back and forth between the east and the west on the trains. Sometimes I stowed away with a week's food in an empty

furniture car, sometimes I rode the "blind baggage," but mostly it was the old stand-by of the "bindle-stiff" called "riding the rods." My nerve was good and my arms strong, and it wasn't long before I could swing up and disappear inside the "bumpers" of a train doing thirty miles an hour as easily as the conductor swung on to the tail of the caboose by his hand-rail. It was little idea I had that the tricks I learned in those days were going to make all the difference between my starving in a German prison camp and (what is happening now) being fed on chocolates and pink teas in London by way of training for another go at the Huns.

In 1913 I went to South America to set up and run threshing outfits that had been sold to the ranchers by the Racine company I had been working for winters. I had a two years' contract, and was supposed to go to Uruguay or the Argentine. If I had done that, probably things would have been all right. But at the last moment, as a result of some one else dropping out, I was sent to Rio Grande do Sul, in the southern "pan-handle" of Brazil. But don't believe that because it was Brazil there were any Brazilians there, or leastways any that counted for anything. The Germans have been

swarming into Rio Grande and Santa Catharina for thirty years, and to-day southern Brazil is as "Dutch" as —southern Wisconsin. Probably, in fact, it is more so, for there are over half a million Germans there, and hardly a third that many Brazilians.

I had been avoiding German farms for the last two or three years, but in Rio Grande all the ranchers were Germans, and I had to go wherever an outfit had been sold anyhow. The notches multiplied pretty fast on my old monkey-wrench for about three weeks, but at the end of that time I found myself in jail for knocking out the front teeth of a fat German farmer after I had ducked a prod from his pitchfork. Our agent at Santa Catharina and the American Consul at Santos got me clear, but the former took the occasion to cancel my contract and ship me home before, as he put it, I had ruined the company's trade in that end of Brazil.

I was breaking prairie with a big gasoline tractor outfit in northern Manitoba when the European War started, and so sure I was that my country was going to take some kind of a stand against the invasion of Belgium that I got ready at once to go home and enlist in case we had to back up the protest with force. I waited, with my grip packed, until it was plain

that there was no chance of any move from our brave statesmen at Washington—it must have been three or four weeks before I gave up hope—and then threw up my job, did sixty miles on horseback in nine hours to the railway station, and went to the nearest recruiting office. They would probably have taken me as an American, but I was taking no chances on being rejected. I told them I was an Irish-Canadian, and the next day was being put through the paces by the drill-sergeant. I could have got much more pay and a better billet generally by going into the transport service and driving a motor truck, but I had suddenly become aware that I had been nursing a sort of slumbering desire to kill Germans for the last decade, and I wasn't going to miss the chance to let that desire wake up. I sewed an extra loop on my belt so that I could have my good old monkey-wrench always handy, and began looking anxiously forward to the time when I should be able to complete my "register" of bashed-up Dutchmen on the handle. I might have to use my rifle for long-range work, I told myself, but for the close-in action in the trenches I was going to do with my wrench what the other fellows did with their bayonets. Lucky it was for my peace of mind in those days that I couldn't look forward and

see what the end of the next eight or ten months had in pickle for me.

The call was pretty persistent for men in those first months of the war and, in spite of the shortage of all kinds of equipment, our training was rushed from the very beginning. Most of the boys in my regiment had seen service or had training—some had been in the South African War, and others had been members of the English Territorials or the Canadian Militia—already, and we made much better progress than the rawer contingents that came later. We had about three months in Canada, a little longer in England (where I had a touch of typhoid on Salisbury Plain), and by the early spring of 1915 we were in reserve in Flanders. By the time the Germans made their second attempt to drive through Ypres to Calais we had been pushed up into the first line. Until the big attack came, however, we had had no real fighting. The Germans—I had begun to call them Huns by this time instead of Dutchmen—made scattering raids on our trenches and we made scattering raids on theirs, but I never figured in any of this to the extent of mixing in hand-to-hand work. I had no chances to add any notches to the handle of my old monkey-wrench, but from my always carrying it around with me the English

"Tommies" (who call a wrench a spanner) had dubbed me "Spanner Mike." They pretended to believe I was a little "cracked" about my trusty old friend, but I found that they were never above borrowing it for everything, from opening boxes from home to tinkering the gear of broken-down automobile trucks—"motor lorries," they call them. It's really remarkable what a lot of things a man can use a monkey-wrench for if only he happens to have it handy when he needs it.

For some days the shell-fire against us had been getting heavier—at least they called it heavy then; it would be nothing now—and we knew that the Huns were getting ready for some kind of an attack. What kind it was going to be we little dreamed, for even our officers seem to have known nothing about the gas they had been experimenting with over in Germany. When it came—it rolled toward us in heavy clouds like the morning mists in the Dakota "Bad Lands"—the word went round that the Huns' munitions had got afire, and we were telling each other that we ought to be sent across to take advantage of the confusion. It was only when we began to notice that it was bubbling up at fairly regular intervals—thick greasy yellow clouds of it—that it seemed they

might be putting up a game on us, and by that time one of the advanced tongues of the stuff lapped over into our trench.

I shall never forget the horrible agony and surprise in the eyes of the men who got that first dose. It was the look of a dog being suddenly beaten for something it hadn't done. They looked at each other with questioning eyes—I only recall hearing one man start cursing—then they began gulping and coughing, and then fell down with their faces in their hands. All the time the shrapnel was popping overhead and raining bullets about, and, just as the gas began to pour over my parapet, a bullet knocked my rifle out of my hand, and I slipped in the mud as I jumped back and went down in a heap. It must have been all of six weeks before I stood on my feet again.

My first sensation was of a smarting way up inside of my nose. This quickly extended to my throat, and then, as my lungs suddenly seemed filled with red-hot needles, I was seized with a spasm of coughing. Coughing up red-hot needles is not exactly a pleasant operation, and the pain was intense. Mercifully, it was only a few minutes before a sort of stupor seemed to come on, but even as I passed into half-consciousness I was aware of my outraged lungs

revolting, in heaves that shook my frame, against the poison that had swamped the trench. With some of my comrades the fighting instinct was the last thing that died, and I have a sort of a recollection of two or three of them clutching at the parapet and firing from cough-shaken shoulders off into the depths of the rolling yellow gas clouds. One lad toppled over beside me and still kept pumping shots from the bottom of the trench. I remember hazily trying to kick his rifle out of his hand as he discharged it over my ear, and, failing to locate it with my foot, recall groping instinctively for my old wrench and trying to disarm him with that. My last recollection of this stage of things was the shock of feeling the wrench-handle swing backward harmlessly for lack of my two shrapnel-smashed fingers to steady it.

I had rolled and writhed, in the agony of the pain of the gas in my lungs, in a pool of slush in the bottom of the trench, and it must have been the lying with my face buried in the shoulder of my wet woollen tunic that saved my life. Most of my comrades were quite unconscious when the Huns, with their heads protected by baggy "snoots," came pouring into the trench, but I had enough of my senses left unparalysed to be able to watch them in a hazy

sort of way. The horrible quietness of the thing was positively uncanny. Always before the enemy had charged with yells (it is directed in their manual that they do so, though of course, a man "gives tongue" naturally on such occasions from sheer excitement), but now they were hardly making a sound. Probably this was by orders, so that no more air than was necessary should be taken into the lungs, but even when some of them did try to speak the words were so muffled that it must have been very hard to make them out.

The Huns were pretty excited at first, and started right down the trench bayoneting one body after another. But before they got to me an officer stopped them for a minute and evidently gave them to understand that they were to confine their butchery only to those that tried to resist. Two or three of our boys, who had not gone under entirely but had not sense enough to understand the uselessness of putting up a fight, made a few groggy passes at the Huns and paid the penalty. I lay quiet and played "possum," but got a nasty prod in the groin when one of them turned me over with his bayonet to see where I was wounded. There was still a good deal of gas in the bottom of the trench, and between that and loss of blood I

must have lost consciousness entirely about this time.

My recollections covering the next day or two are very dim and confused, but one thing was photographed so clearly on my mind that the image of it has never faded; I even grow hot as I think of it now, over a year later. This was the last thing I saw before I "went to sleep" in the trenches—two Huns using my monkey-wrench (the tool I had been "strafing" "Dutchmen" with for the last ten years, and which I had brought along to continue that good work with) to tinker up one of our own smashed machine-guns to use against our own men. I never saw it again, and its loss rankled in my mind during the whole year that I was doomed to spend in German hospitals and prison camps.

I have some memory of being carried in a stretcher, and of passing through one or two dressing-stations where my wounds were washed and bandaged. My connected recollections begin after my waking up in a hospital—well back from the Front, but still not out of the sound of the guns—that was evidently devoted entirely to "gas" cases. The ward I was in was filled with men from my own regiment, but what interested me specially—as soon as I was able to take any interest in anything beyond my own

suffering—was to observe that a great many Germans were also being treated in the same hospital. I never did find out just how these happened to be "gassed," but presume it was either through accidents to their apparatus or from their "snoots" being faulty.

At any rate, the Germans had evidently prepared in advance for "gas" cases, and the chances are that they pulled through a good many of us who might have died had we been taken back to our own hospitals, where they had, at that time, small facilities for handling that kind of trouble. The ward was kept as hot as a Turkish bath, and some of our chaps thought this was done with the idea of making our agony worse. One of them, who jumped out of bed, threw up a window, got a lungful of cold air, and died the same night, gave us a proper object-lesson in why the air had to be kept at close to blood heat. Some of them also thought that a kind of stuff they gave us to inhale made us worse rather than better, but that was only their imagination. If there was any real ground for complaint it might have been on the score that the doctors tried a good many experiments on us because this was the first chance they had had to study gas poisoning on a large scale, but that was no more than we could have expected.

Probably our own doctors would have been glad of some "dogs," in the shape of Huns, to "try it on" when they first began to study "gassing."

But the doctors were always attentive, and the nurses always kind—more than kind, most of them. But I already had learned that a nurse's best stock-in-trade is her "sympathy," and those I met in Germany were no exception to the rule. I think it was the way that those plump blonde *fräuleins* looked after us poor devils in that steaming-hot ward that kept me from trying to run amuck and commit murder as soon as I was well enough to be sure that my memory of those two Huns tinkering at our machine-gun with my old monkey-wrench was no "fevered vision."

I have been told often since returning to England that it will be just as well not to say too much about my hardships in the German prison camps, as it might be the way of making things all the worse for those still doomed to remain there. So I shall touch lightly on this side of my experiences, and, to be on the safe side, will try not to mention any camps or other German localities by name. I was sent to what, had I but known it, was the most liberally run prison camp in Germany after my discharge from the hospital, but even at that the treatment

was so abominable in comparison with what I had been receiving and had a right to expect that it undid at once the "soothing" effect the kind nurses and doctors had had on me. I don't mean that I went back physically a great deal—my constitution was too strong for that—but only that my old hate of the Hun redoubled. This would have been all very well if I had only been back in the trenches, but in a prison camp it could only have one end. I dropped in his tracks with my fist—mighty hard it was his shaved head felt to my half-healed "right"—the first guard that tried to hustle me into line with the toe of his boot. Then I used up what strength I had left in a rough and-tumble with three or four others, until one of them finally put me to sleep with the butt of his rifle. In at least three other camps I could name I would have been shot then and there (it has happened to many a lad whose pride made him turn loose on a brutal guard), and I can count myself very lucky that I got off with no more than a bit more of a beating up and two weeks' solitary confinement on black bread and water. Perhaps the worst consequence of my action was my transfer, a few weeks later, to a camp that has since become notorious for both its unhealthfulness and its inhumanity.

The first glimmerings of sense (regarding the situation that I was going to have to face as a prisoner of war in Germany) was let into my rather thick head by the blow it got from that rifle-butt ; the rest—enough to start me on the right course, at least—filtered in during my two weeks of solitary confinement on bread and water. I was of no use to myself or any one else in a German prison camp, I told myself. I had no chance there either to kill Huns or destroy Hun property. Once outside I might well be able to do both—perhaps even get back to England and join my regiment if any of it was left. How to get out ?—that was the question. From that time on I turned my every thought and act to that one end.

What makes it almost hopeless for a prisoner of war to get out of Germany is not so much the actual escape from his prison—that is comparatively easy, especially if he is on outside work—as the lack of clothes and money, and the difficulty of avoiding giving himself away by being unable to speak the language. These things make the odds a thousand to one against the average prisoner having more than twenty-four hours' freedom at the outside. The chances against success are so big that few attempt it. Luckily, I had one advantage over the general run of the

prisoners in my ability to speak fairly good German. I must have had a lot of accent, of course, but I still understood all that was said to me in German, and was also able to say all that I wanted to. This would be good enough, I told myself, to run a bluff with the ordinary run of people I might meet about my being a returned German-American come back to work for my Fatherland; that is to say, I ought to be able to prevent such people from being suspicious of me, where they would have attacked or reported a man who could not speak German at once. Anything in the way of police or officials I should have to fight shy of, and, as I foresaw there must be all kinds of checks on strangers and travellers, I knew I should have to steer clear of trains and hotels. I felt sure of myself on the score of language, therefore; clothes and money were things to be provided as opportunity offered. Fortunately, Fate was very kind to me in this respect.

One little incident I must mention before I go on with my story. In the prison I was transferred to most of the English prisoners, after a while, began to receive parcels from home, even some of the Canadians coming in on the deal. I, having no friends either in Canada or England, got nothing direct, but all sorts of nice little

odds and ends of dainties came my way in the final "divvy." One lad from the south of England, who was dying with a sort of slow blood-poisoning and lack of care of a never-healed wound at the back of his neck, was especially generous to me with the things he got from home, and when he finally went under I managed to get permission to write a few words to his family, telling them, among other things, how kind he had been to me with his parcels. And what should they do—his broken-hearted mother and sisters in Devonshire—but "adopt" me in his place and keep right on sending the chocolate and cigarettes and other "goodies" just as regularly as before. And now they've been to see me here, and tell me they are going to keep sending me things when I return to the Front just the same as though I was the boy they had lost.

As soon as I had fully made up my mind what I wanted to do, I went on my good behaviour, got into the "trusty" class, and was one of the first picked for outside work when the call came for English prisoners to help in harvesting and road-making. I had a good chance to practise my German during the harvest work, but the prospects for making good after a "get-away" were not very promising, and

I had sense enough to bide my time. But when I got switched on to road work, and when almost the first thing I saw was a bunch of Huns clustered round an old Holt "Caterpillar" tractor that had got stalled on them, I felt that time was drawing near.

Now a "Caterpillar" is just about the finest tractor in the world for general purposes, provided it is run by a man that has had plenty of experience with its funny little ways; in the hands of any one else—even a first-class engineer that is quite at home with a wheel tractor—it is the original fount of trouble. To me the machine was an old friend, however, for I had run one for two or three seasons in the West and worked for a winter in one of the company's factories in Illinois. I took the first opportunity to let the Huns know my qualifications, and when they saw me start in to true up the wobbly "track," they just about fell on my neck then and there. They had seized the machine in a Belgian sugar-beet field a few days after the outbreak of the war, they explained, and it had been used for a while to haul heavy artillery in the drive into France. After a time the hard usage had begun to tell on the "track," and—as they had no new parts to replace worn ones with—it had been giving about as much trouble

as it was worth ever since. When I told them that it was adjustment rather than replacement that was needed, and that in a few days I could have the machine as good as new, they fairly tumbled over themselves to " borrow " me for the job.

As a matter of fact, the old " crawler " was just about on its last legs, but I knew in any case that I could tinker it into some kind of running shape, and the comparative freedom of the job was what I wanted. This worked out even better than I expected, for after the first day or two, in order to save the time taken up by returning me to the prison camp at night and bringing me back in the morning, they arranged for me to bunk in in the road camp. They were too much occupied in hustling the job along to think about asking me for my parole—a lucky thing, for I should have had a hard time to keep from breaking it.

With two men to help me, I took the tractor all down, " babbitted " up the bearings, readjusted the gears, and had it up and running at the end of a week. With a string back to the seat to open up the throttle for the sharp pulls, I had it snaking a string of ten waggon-loads of crushed rock where it had been stalling down on three before the overhauling. During that

week I had also managed to pick up—no matter how—several marks in money, and had succeeded in concealing so effectually the greasy jacket of one of my assistants that he gave up hunting for it and got a new one. A machinist's cap had already been given me, and the evening that the other helper washed out his overalls and flung them over his tent to dry, I—seeing a chance to complete my wardrobe—decided promptly that the time had come to make a move. They had offered me a steady job running the old "Caterpillar," and at something better than ordinary "prisoner's pay," but as it would have kept me in the same neighbourhood, I could not figure how it would help my chances in the least to "linger on."

There was supposed to be a sentry watching the road machinery, and also keeping a wary eye on the tent where I bunked with a half-dozen of the engineers, but he did not take his job very seriously, and I knew I would have no difficulty avoiding him. We had had a hard day of it, and my tent mates were in bed by dark—about 8 o'clock—and asleep, by their deep breathing, a few minutes later. They all slept in their working clothes, else I could have made up my outfit then and there. But it did not matter, for within half a minute of the

time I had slipped noiselessly under the loosened tent-flap, I was making off down the road with a full suit of German machinist's togs under my arm. Five minutes later I stopped in the darker darkness under a tree by the roadside and slipped them on over my prison suit, rightly anticipating that the extra warmth of the latter might be very welcome if I had much sleeping out to do.

It was partly bravado, probably, and partly because I felt that, if missed, I would be searched for in the opposite direction, that caused me to head for the two-mile-distant town of X——. And it was probably the same combination which led me, after passing unchallenged down the long main street, to march up to the wicket of a "movie" show, pay my twenty-five pfennig and pass inside. Had there been a "hue and cry" that night (which there was not), this was undoubtedly the last place they would have looked for me in.

The films were mostly war views—cracking fine things from both the Russian and French fronts—and other patriotic subjects, but among them was one of those "blood-and-thunder thrillers" from California. I don't recall exactly how the story went, but the thing that set me thinking was the way the heroine pinched the lights off the automobile they had kidnapped

her in, and afterwards pawned them for enough to get a ticket home with. What was to prevent my going back and getting busy on my old "Caterpillar"? I asked myself. The magneto was worth something like a hundred dollars, and even if I had no chance to sell it, it was a pity to overlook so easy a bit of "strafing." I concluded that my steps had been guided to that "movie" show by my lucky star, and promptly got up and started back for the road-making camp. On the way some tipsy villagers passed me singing the "Hymn of Hate," the air and most of the words of which I had already picked up, and, out of sheer happiness at being again (if only for a few hours) at liberty, I joined in the explosive bursts of the chorus, booming out louder than any of them on "England!" Evidently, unconsciously, I had done quite the proper thing, for they raised their voices to match mine, gave a "Hoch" or two, and passed on without stopping. That also gave me an idea. During the whole following two weeks of my wanderings in Germany every man, woman or child that I passed upon the road, in light or in darkness, might have heard me humming "The Hymn of Hate," "Die Wacht am Rhein," or, after I had mastered it toward the end, "Deutschland über Alles."

It was plain that my flight had not been discovered, for I found the camp as quiet as when I left it three hours before. I could just make out the figure of the sentry pacing along down the line of tractors and dump-waggons, but the canvas which had been thrown over the "Caterpillar" to protect it from possible rain made it easy for me to escape attracting his attention. Of light I had no need; I knew the old "65" well enough to work on it in my sleep. A wrench and pair of nippers, located just where I had left them in their loops in the cover of the tool-box over the right "track," were all I needed. First I cut the insulated copper wires running to the magneto with the nippers, and then (placing my double-folded handkerchief over them to prevent noise) unscrewed with the wrench the nuts from the bolts which held the costly electrical contrivance to the steel frame of the tractor. Then I cut off with a knife a good-sized square of the canvas paulin that covered the machine, wrapped the magneto in it, and tied up the bundle with a piece of the insulated copper wire, leaving a doubled loop for a handle. Then I threw out some of the more delicate adjustments, dropped some odds and ends of small tools and bits of metal down among the gears where they would

do the most "good," pocketed the knife and nippers, and, with the magneto in one hand and the biggest wrench I could find in the other, set off for X—— again. The wrench was my last and greatest inspiration; it was to take the place of the one the Huns had robbed me of in the trenches. I am glad to be able to write that I have it by me at the present moment, and that it is slated to go back to the Front with me—, I hope to do a bit of the "strafing" that Fate denied the other.

Probably no prisoner of war was ever loose in the interior of Germany with a clearer idea of what he wanted to do, and how he intended to do it, than I had at this moment. I knew that my only chance of escaping capture within the next twenty-four hours was in putting a long way—a hundred miles or more—between myself and that place by daylight, when the "alarm" would go out. I knew the only way this could be done was by train; but I also knew that the quickest way to instant arrest was to try to enter a station and take a train in the ordinary way. To any but one who had "hoboed" back and forth across the North American Continent as I had the game would have seemed a hopeless one.

I was far from despairing, however; in fact,

I never felt more equal to a situation in my life. The whole thing hinged on my getting my first train. After that I felt I could manage. I had studied German passenger cars as closely as possible in watching them pass at a distance, and was certain they offered fairly good "tourist" accommodation on the "bumpers" or brake beams; but I did not feel that I yet knew enough of their under-slung "architecture" to board them when on the move. This meant that I was going to have to start on my "maiden" trip from a station or siding, where I could find a train at rest. A siding would, of course, have been vastly preferable, but as I had none definitely located, and knew that I might easily waste the rest of the night looking for one, the X—— *bahnhof* was the only alternative. Because this was so plainly the *only* way, I was nerved to the job far better than if I had had to decide between two or three lines of action.

Nor was I in any doubt as to how the thing would have to be done. At the ticket windows, or at the gates to the train shed, I was positive I would be challenged at once—even if no word had yet gone to the police of my escape—and held for investigation. Besides, I had not money enough to take me a quarter the distance I felt that I should have to go to be reasonably safe.

The only way was to follow the tracks in through the yards and make the best of any opportunity that offered. The ten or twelve-pound magneto would be a good deal of a nuisance, but, as the possible sale of it at some distant point offered an easy way to the money I was sure to need I decided not to let it go till I had to.

I already knew the general lay of the X—— station, and decided that it would be best to go to the tracks by crossing a field just outside of the town. My road crossed the line a half-mile further away, but I felt sure a bridge over a canal which would have to be passed if I took to the ties at this point would be guarded by soldiers. A stumble through a weed-choked ditch, a trudge across a couple of hundred yards of rye stubble, a climb over the wire fencing of the right-of-way, and I was once more crushing stone ballasting under my brogans, as I had done so often before. Ten minutes later I passed unchallenged under the lights of a switching-tower and was inside the X—— yards. Almost at the same moment a bright headlight flashed out down the line ahead, and before I reached the station a long passenger train had pulled in and stopped. "Just in time," I muttered to myself; "that's *my* train, wherever it's going."

Entering the train-shed, I avoided the platforms and hurried along between the passenger train and a string of freight cars standing on the next track. Two or three yard hands brushed by me without a glance, for there was practically no difference between my greasy machinist's rig-out and their own. But as I stopped and began to peer under one of the *erstige* coaches I saw, with the tail of my eye, a brakeman of the freight train pause in his clamber up the end of one of the cars and crane his head suspiciously in my direction. Scores of times before (though never with so much at stake) I had faced the same kind of emergency, and, without an instant's hesitation and as though it was the most natural thing in the world to be doing, I started tapping one of the wheels with my big steel wrench. Heaven only knows if they test for cracked car wheels that way in Germany! I certainly have never seen them do it, at any rate. Anyhow, it served my purpose of making the brakeman think I was there on business, for he climbed on up on to his train and passed out of sight. Two seconds later I was snuggled up on the "bumpers" with my wrench and magneto in my lap.

The brake-beams of a German *schlafwagen* are not quite as roomy as those of an American

Pullman, but they might be much worse. The train was a fairly fast one, making few stops, and I believe would have taken me right in to Berlin if I had remained aboard long enough. I was getting rather cramped and stiff after four or five hours, however, and not caring to run the risk of being seen riding by daylight, I dropped off as the train slowed down at a junction on the outskirts of what appeared, and turned out, to be a large manufacturing city. The magneto slipped out of my two-fingered hand as I jumped off, and brought up in the frog of a switch with a jolt that must have played hob with its delicate insides, but I wasn't doing any worrying on that score. Here I was, safe and sound, a good hundred miles beyond any place they would ever think of looking for me. Moreover, I had money in my pocket, as well as the possible means of getting more. I couldn't have wished for a better start.

There are a number of reasons why it would not be best for me to go into detail at this time regarding the various ways in which I steered clear of trouble in getting beyond the German frontiers, not the least of them being that it might make it harder in the future for some other poor devil trying to do the same thing. I do not think, however, there would be one

chance in a thousand for a British prisoner less "heeled for the game"—a man unable to speak the language and to steal rides on the "brake-beams" of the trains, I mean—than I was to win through from any great distance from the frontier. But however that may be, I am not going to make it harder for any one who may get the chance by telling just how I did it.

Money—to be obtained by selling the magneto of the tractor I had brought along with me—was the first thing for me to see to after getting well clear of the country in which I was likely to be searched for, and it was in going after this that I was nearest to "coming a cropper." I made the mistake—in my haste to get rid of the burden of the heavy thing—of offering it to the first electrical supply shop I came to. The proprietor wanted the thing very badly, but while he seemed to accept readily enough my story that I was a returned German-American working in munition factories, he said that the law required him to call up the police and ask if anything of the kind had been reported as stolen. I was not in the least afraid that the magneto would be reported at a point so distant from the one I had taken it from, but I did know that I couldn't "stand up" for two minutes in any kind of interview with the police. So I told

old Fritz to go ahead and telephone, and as soon as his back was turned grabbed up the magneto and slipped out to the street as quietly as possible.

Whether the police made any effort to trace me or not I never knew. There was no evidence of it, anyhow. I headed into the first side street, and from that into another, and then kept going until I came to a dirty little secondhand shop with a Jew name over the door. Luckily the old Sheeny had had some dealing in junk and hardware, and knew at once the value of the goods I had to offer. As a matter of fact, indeed, the magneto was a " Bosch," made in Germany in the first place, and imported to the U.S. by the makers of the tractor from which I had taken it. I was a good deal winded from quick walking —I hadn't a lot of strength at that time anyhow —and the shrewd old Hebrew must have felt sure that I had stolen the thing within the hour. He said no word about 'phoning the police, however, but merely looked at me slyly out of the corner of one eye and offered me fifty marks for an instrument that was worth four or five hundred in ordinary times, and probably half again as much more through war demands. I could probably have got more out of him, but I was in no temper for bargaining, and the quick

way in which I snapped up his offer must have confirmed any suspicions the old fox may have had concerning the way I came by the "goods." The joint was probably little more than a "fence"—a thieves' clearing-house—anyhow, and I was dead lucky to stumble on to it as I did.

I had two hearty meals that day in cheap restaurants—taking care to order no bread or anything else I felt there might be a chance of my needing a "card" for—and that night swung up on to the "rods" of a passenger train that had slowed down to something like ten miles an hour at a crossing, and rode for several hours in a direction which I correctly figured to be that of the Dutch frontier. I spent the following day moving freely about a good-sized manufacturing city, and the next night "beat" through to a town on the border of Holland. As this was not a place where there were any factories, my machinist's rig-out didn't "merge into the landscape" in quite the same way it did in the places where there was a lot of manufacturing, and I stayed there only long enough to make sure that the frontier was guarded in a way that would make the chances very much against my getting across without some kind of help. Such help I knew that I could get in Belgium, and therefore, as the whole of the

German railway system seemed to be at my disposal for night excursions, I decided to try my luck from that direction. I wanted to take a look at Essen and Krupps' while I was so near, but finally concluded it would not be best to take a chance in a district where there were sure to be more on the watch than anywhere else. The distant tops of tall chimneys and a cloud of smoke in the sky were all that I saw of the "place where the war was made."

The Germans boast of a great intelligence system, yet not once—so far as I could see—was I under suspicion during the several days in which I made my leisurely way, by more or less indirect route, into Belgium. As a matter of fact, I did not give them very much to "lay hold of." I kept closely to my original plan of steering clear of railway stations and hotels, and of asking for nothing in shops or restaurants that might require "tickets." The weather was good, and most of my sleeping was done in about the same quiet sort of outdoor nooks as the American "hobo" seeks out in making his way across the continent. The only difference was that it was safer, if anything, in Germany, and many times when, in the States, I would have been greeted by a policeman's club on the soles of my boots, I saw, from the tail of my eye, the "arm of the

law " strut by without a second glance at the tired machinist, with his wrench beside him, dozing under a tree in a park or by the roadside. I had half a dozen good meals with kind-hearted peasants, and one night—it was raining, and I was pretty well played out—I accepted the offer of a bed in a farmhouse, the owner of which had a son who had a sheep ranch in Montana, near Miles City, a place where I had run a threshing outfit one season. He said he was very sorry that the boy had not been as clever as I was in evading the " Englanders " and getting home to help the Fatherland. He was a kind old fellow, and I tinkered up his mowing-machine and put a new valve in his leaking pump to square my account. There were a number of little incidents of this kind, and the simple kindliness of the old peasants I met—mostly fathers and mothers and wives with sons or husbands in the war—was responsible for the fact that I did not feel quite as harshly against Huns in general when I left their country as when I entered it. Still, I know very well that their good treatment of me was only because they thought I was one of themselves, and that they would probably have given me up to a mob to tear to pieces if they had suspected for a minute what I really was.

I went through into Belgium on the brake-

beams of a fast freight which, from the way it seemed to have the right-of-way over passengers, I concluded was carrying munitions urgently needed at the front. It was slowed down in some kind of a traffic jam at a junction when I boarded it, but when I left it—when I thought I was as far into Belgium as I wanted to go—it was hitting up a lively thirty miles an hour or more, and all my practice at the game could not save me from a nasty roll. Luckily, I dropped clear of the ties, and as the fill was of soft earth, with a ditch full of water at the bottom, I was not much the worse for a fall that would have brained me a dozen times over on most American lines.

Of how I got out of Belgium into Holland, and finally on to England, it would not do for me to write anything at all at this time, beyond saying that it was entirely due to aid that I had from the Belgians themselves. One of the most interesting chapters of the war will be the one—not to be published till all is over—telling how Belgian patriots in Belgium not only kept touch with each other during the German occupation, but also contrived to send news—and even go and come themselves—to the outer world. Even the " electric fence " along the Holland boundary has no terrors for them, and I am giving away

no secret when I say that there are more ways of getting safely under or over that fence than there are wires in it. It will probably do no harm for me to say that *I* crossed this barrier on a very cleverly made little folding stairway which when not in use, was kept hidden under a square of sod but a few feet away from the fence itself. The genial old German sentry who spread it for me—he had, of course, been liberally bribed, and probably had some regular "working arrangement" with my Belgian friends—confided to me at parting that, when he had accumulated enough money to keep him comfortably the rest of his life in Holland, he intended to climb over that little stairway himself and never go back. I have often wondered how many other Germans feel the same about leaving "the sinking ship."

THE SINGING SOLDIER

I

THERE was something just a bit ominous in the brooding warmth of the soft air that was stirring at the base of the towering cliffs of the Marmolada, where I took the *teleferica;* and the tossing aigrettes of wind-driven snow at the lip of the pass where the cable-line ended in the lee of a rock just under the Italian first-line trenches signalled the reason why. The vanguard of one of those irresponsible mavericks of mountain storms that so delight to bustle about and take advantage of the fine weather to make surprise attacks on the Alpine sky-line outposts was sneaking over from the Austrian side; and somewhere up there where the tenuous wire of the *teleferica* fined down and merged into the amorphous mass of the cliff behind, my little car was going to run into it.

"A good ten minutes to snug down in, anyhow," I said to myself. And after the fashion of the South Sea skipper who shortens sail and battens down the hatches with his weather eye

on the squall roaring down from windward, I tucked in the loose ends of the rugs about my feet, rolled up the high fur collar of my *Alpinio* coat, and buttoned the tab across my nose.

But things were developing faster than I had calculated. As the little wire basket glided out of the cut in the forty-foot drift that had encroached on its aerial right-of-way where the supporting cables cleared a jutting crag, I saw that it was not only an open-and-above-board frontal attack that I had to reckon with, but also a craftily-planned flank movement quite in keeping with the fact that the whole affair, lock, stock, and barrel, was a "Made in Austria" product. Swift-driven little shafts of blown snow, that tried hard to keep their plumes from tossing above the sheltering rock-pinnacles, were wriggling over between the little peaks on both sides of the pass and slipping down to launch themselves in flank attack along the narrowing valley traversed by the *teleferica* and the zig-zagging trail up to the Italian positions. Even as I watched, one of them came into position to strike, and straight out over the ice-cap covering the brow of a cliff shot a clean-lined wedge of palpable, solid whiteness.

One instant my face was laved in the moist air-current drawing up from the wooded lower

valley, where the warm fingers of the thaw were pressing close on the hair-poised triggers of the ready-cocked avalanches ; the next I was gasping in a blast of Arctic frigidity as the points of the blown ice-needles tingled in my protesting lungs with the sting of hastily-gulped champagne. Through frost-rimmed eyelashes I had just time to see a score of similar shafts leap out and go charging down into the bottom of the valley, before the main front of the storm came roaring along, and heights and hollows were masked by swishing veils of translucent white. In the space of a few seconds an amphitheatre of soaring mountain peaks roofed with a vault of deep purple sky had resolved itself into a gusty gulf of spinning snow blasts.

My little wire basket swung giddily to one side as the first gust drove into it, promptly to swing back again, after the manner of a pendulum, when the air-buffer was undermined by a counter-gust and fell away ; but the deeply grooved wheel was never near to jumping off the supporting cable, and the even throb of the distant engine coming down the pulling wire felt like a kindly hand-pat of reassurance.

"Good old *teleferica!*" I said half aloud, raising myself on one elbow and looking over the side : "you're as comfy and safe as a

passenger lift and as thrilling as an aeroplane. But "—as the picture of a line of ant-like figures I had noted toiling up the snowy slope a few moments before flashed to my mind—"what happens to a man on his feet—a man not being yanked along out of trouble by an engine on the end of a nice strong cable—when he's caught in a maelstrom like that? What must be happening to those poor Alpini? Whatever can they be doing?"

And even before the clinging insistence of the warm breeze from the lower valley had checked the impetuosity of the invader, and diverted him, a cringing captive, to baiting avalanches with what was left of his strength, I had my answer; for it was while the ghostly draperies of the snow-charged wind-gusts still masked the icy slope below that, through one of those weird tricks of acoustics so common among high mountain peaks, the flute-like notes of a man singing in a clear tenor floated up to the ears I was just unmuffling from a furry collar:—

"Fratelli d'Itali, l'Italia, s'è desta;
Dell' elmo di Scipio s'è cinta la testa!"

It was the "Inno di Mameli," the Song of 1848—the Marseillaise of the Italians. I recognised it instantly, because, an hour previously my hosts at luncheon in the officers' mess below

had been playing it on the gramophone. Clear and silvery, like freshly minted coins made vocal, the stirring words winged up through the pulsing air till the "sound chute" by which they had found their way was broken up by the milling currents of the dying storm. But I knew that the Alpini were still singing,—that they had been singing all the time, indeed,—and when the last of the snow-flurries was finally lapped up by the warm wind, there they were, just as I expected to find them, pressing onwards and upwards under their burdens of soup-cans, wine-bottles, stove-wood, blankets, munitions, and the thousand and one other things that must pass up the life-line of a body of soldiers holding a mountain pass in midwinter.

II

This befell, as it chanced, during one of my early days on the Alpine front, and the incident of men singing in a blizzard almost strong enough to sweep them from their feet made no small impression on me at the moment. It was my first experience of the kind. A week later I should have considered it just as astonishing to have encountered, under any conditions, an Alpino who was *not* singing; for to him—to all Italian soldiers, indeed—song furnishes the prin-

cipal channel of outward expression of the spirit within him. And what a spirit it is! He sings as he works he sings as he plays, he sings as he fights, and—many a tale is told of how this or that comrade has been seen to go down with a song on his lips—he sings as he dies. He soothes himself with song, he beguiles himself with song, he steadies himself with song, he exalts himself with song. It is not song as the German knows it, not the ponderous marching chorus that the Prussian Guard thunders to order in the same way that it thumps through its goose-step ; but rather a simple burst of song that is as natural and spontaneous as the soaring lark's greeting to the rising sun.

Discipline of any kind is more or less irksome to the high-spirited Alpino, but he manages to struggle along under it with tolerable goodwill so long as it is plain to him that the military exigencies really demand it. But the one thing that he really chafes under is the prohibition to sing. This is, of course, quite imperative when he is on scouting or patrol-work, or engaged in one of the incessant surprise attacks which form so important a feature of Alpine warfare. He was wont to sing as he climbed in those distant days when he scaled mountains for the love of it ; and, somehow, a sort of reflex action seems

to have been established between the legs and the vocal chords that makes it extremely awkward to work the one without the other. If the truth could be told, indeed, probably not a few half-consummated *coups de main* would be found to have been nearly marred by a joyous burst of " unpremeditated melody " on the part of some spirited Alpino who succumbed to the force of habit.

I was witness of a rather amusing incident illustrative of the difficulty that even the officer of Alpini experiences in denying himself vocal expression, not only when it is strictly against regulations, but even on occasions when, both by instinct and experience, he knows that " breaking into song " is really dangerous. It had to do with passing a certain exposed point in the Cadore at a time when there was every reason to fear the incidence of heavy avalanches. Your real Alpino has tremendous respect for the snow-slide, but no fear. He has—especially since the war—faced death in too many really disagreeable forms to have any dread of what must seem to him the grandest and most inspiring finish of the lot—the one end which he could be depended upon to pick if ever the question of alternatives were in the balance. In the matter of the avalanche, as in most other things, he is

quite fatalistic. If a certain *valanga* is meant for him, what use trying to avoid it? if it is not meant for him, what use taking precautions? All the precautions will be vain against *your* avalanche; all of them will be superfluous as regards the ones *not* for you.

It chances, however, that this comforting Oriental philosophy entered not into the reckoning of the Italian General Staff when it laid its plans for minimising unnecessary casualties; and so, among other precautionary admonitions, the order went out that soldiers passing certain exposed sections, designated by boards bearing the warning *Pericoloso di Valanga*, should not raise the voice above a speaking tone, and, especially, that no singing should be indulged in. This is, of course, no more than sensible, for a shout, or a high-pitched note of song, may set going just the vibrations of air needed to start a movement on the upper slopes of a mountain side which will culminate in launching a million tons of snow all the way across the lower valley. The Alpino has observed the rule as best he could,—probably saving not a few of his numbers thereby,—but the effort is one that at times tries his stout spirit almost to the breaking point.

On the occasion I have in mind it was necessary for us, in order to reach a position I espe-

cially desired to visit, to climb diagonally across something like three-quarters of a mile of the swath of one of the largest and most treacherous slides on the whole Alpine front. There had been a great avalanche here every year from time out of mind, usually preceded by a smaller one early in the winter. The preliminary slide had already occurred at the time of my visit, and, as the early winter storms had been the heaviest in years, the accumulated snows made the major avalanche almost inevitable on the first day of a warm wind. Such a day, unluckily, chanced to be the only one available for my visit to the position in question. Although it was in the first week in January, the eaves of the houses in the little Alpine village where the colonel quartered had been dripping all night, and even in the early morning the hard-packed snow of the trail was turning soft and slushy when we left our sledge on the main road and set out on foot.

We passed two or three sections marked off by the "Pericoloso" signs, without taking any special precautions; and, even when we came to the big slide, the young major responsible for seeing the venture through merely directed that we were to proceed by twos (there were four of us), with a 300-metre interval between, walking

as rapidly as possible and not doing any unnecessary talking. That was all. There were no dramatics about it—only the few simple directions that were calculated to minimise the chances of "total loss" in case the slide did become restive. How little this young officer had to learn about the ways of avalanches I did not learn till that evening, when his colonel told me that he had been buried, with a company or two of his Alpini, not long previously, and escaped the fate of most of the men only through having been dug out by his dog.

The major, with the captain from the Comando Supremo who had been taking me about the front, went on ahead, leaving me to follow, after five minutes had gone by, with a young lieutenant, a boy so full of bubbling mountain spirits that he had been dancing all along the way and warbling "Rigoletto" to the tree-tops. Even as we waited he would burst into quick snatches of song, each of which was ended with a gulp as it flashed across his mind that the time had come to clamp on the safety-valve.

When his wrist-watch told us that it was time to follow on, the lad clapped his eagle-feather hat firmly on his head, set his jaw, fixed his eyes grimly on the trail in front of him, and strode off into the narrow passage that had been

cut through the towering bulk of the slide. From the do-or-die expression on his handsome young face one might well have imagined that it was the menace of that engulfing mass of poised snow which was weighing him down, and such, I am sure, would have been my own impression had this been my first day among the Alpini. But by now I had seen enough of Italy's mountain soldiers to know that this one was as disdainful of the *valanga* as the *valanga* was of him: and that the crushing burden on his mind at that moment was only the problem how to negotiate that next kilometre of beautiful snow-walled trail without telling the world in one glad burst of song after another how wonderful it was to be alive and young, and climbing up nearer at every step to those glistening snow peaks whence his comrades had driven the enemy headlong but a few months before, and whence, perchance, they would soon move again to take the next valley and the peaks beyond it in their turn. If he had been alone, slide or no slide, orders or no orders, he would have shouted his gladness to the high heavens, come what might; but as it was, with a more or less helpless foreigner on his hands, and within hearing of his superior officer, it was quite another matter.

It was really very interesting going through

that awakening *valanga*,—so my escorting captain told me when we rejoined him and the major under a sheltering cliff at the farther side—especially in the opportunity that the cutting through of the trail gave to study a cross-section of the forest that had been folded down by the sliding snow. Indeed, they had told me in advance of this strange sight, and I had really had it in mind to look out for these up-ended and crumpled pine trees. Moreover, it is quite probable that I did let the corner of an eye rove over them in a perfunctory sort of way; but the fact remains that the one outstanding recollection I have of that thousand-yard-wide pile of hair-poised snow is of the hunched shoulders and comically set face of my young guide as revealed to me when he doubled the zigzags of the tortuous trail that penetrated it.

Time and again, as his eyes would wander to where the yellow light-motes shuttled down through the tree-tops to the snow-cap on the brow of the cliff toward which we toiled, I would hear the quick catch of his breath as, involuntarily, he sucked it in to release it in a ringing whoop of gladness, only—recollecting in time—to expel it again with a wheezy snort of disgust. For the last two or three hundred yards, by humming a plaintive little love lilt through his

nose, he hit upon a fairly innocuous compromise which seemed to serve the desired purpose of releasing the accumulating pressure slowly without blowing off the safety-valve. When we finally came out on the unthreatened expanse of the glacial moraine above, he unleashed his pent-up gladness in a wild peal of exultation that must have sent its bounding echoes caroming up to the solitary pinnacle of the *massif* still in the hands of the slipping Austrians.

That afternoon, as it chanced, the *teleferica* to the summit, after passing the captain and myself up safely, went on a strike while the basket containing the young lieutenant was still only at the first stage of its long crawl, and he had full opportunity to make up, vocally, for lost time. It was an hour before the cable was running smoothly again, and by then it was time, and more than time, for us to descend if we were to reach the lower valley before nightfall. I found my young friend warbling blithely on the *teleferica* terrace when I crawled out at the lower end, apparently no whit upset by the way his excursion had been curtailed.

"What did you do while you were stuck up there in the basket?" I hastened to ask him; for being stalled midway on a *teleferica* cable at any time in the winter is an experience that may

well develop into something serious. I had already heard recitals—in the quiet matter-of-fact Alpini way—of the astonishing feats of aerial acrobatics that had been performed in effecting rescues in such instances, and, once or twice, grim allusions to the tragic consequences when the attempted rescues had failed.

"Oh I just sang for a while," was the laughing reply in Italian; "and then, when it began to get cold up there, I dropped over on to the snow and slid down here to get warm."

I have not yet been able to learn just how far it was that he had to drop before he struck the snow; but, whatever the distance, I am perfectly certain that he kept right on singing all the way.

III

As regards the spirits of the Alpini, song is a barometer; as regards their health, a thermometer. An experienced officer will judge the mental or physical condition of one of his men by noting the way he is singing, or refraining from singing, just as a man determines his dog's condition by feeling its nose to see if it is hot or cold. I remember standing for a half-hour on the wind-swept summit of a lofty Trentino pass with a distinguished major-general who had

taken me out that afternoon in his little mountain-climbing motor to give me an idea of how the winter road was kept clear in a blizzard. The wind was driving through the notch of the pass at fifty miles an hour ; the air was stiff with falling and drifting snow ; and it was through the narrowed holes in our *capuchos* that we watched a battalion filing by on its way from the front-line trenches to the plains for a spell of rest in billets. Packs and cloaks were crusted an inch thick with frozen snow, eyebrows were frosted, beards and moustaches icicled ; but, man after man (though sometimes, as a wind-blast swallowed the sound, one could only guess it by the rhythmically moving lips), they marched singing. Now and then, as the drifts permitted, they marched in lusty choruses of twos and threes ; but for the most part each man was warbling on his own, many of them probably simply humming improvisations, giving vocal expression to their thoughts.

Suddenly the general stepped forward and, tapping sharply with his Alpenstock on the ice-stiff skirt of one of the marchers, brought him to a halt. The frost-rimmed haloes fringing the puckered apertures in the two hoods came close together and there was a quick interchange of question and answer between wind-muffled

mouths. Then, with a clumsy pat of admonition, the general shoved the man back into the passing line.

"That boy wasn't singing," he roared into my ear in response to my look of interrogation as he stepped back into the drift beside me. "Knew something was wrong, so stopped him and asked what. Said he got thirsty—ate raw snow—made throat sore. Told him it served him quite right—an Arab from Tripoli would know better 'n to eat snow."

Three or four times more in the quarter-hour that elapsed before the heightening storm drove us to the shelter of a *rifugio* the general stopped men whose face or bearing implied that there was no song on their lips or in their hearts, and in each instance it transpired that something was wrong. One man confessed to having discarded his flannel abdominal bandage a couple of days before, and was developing a severe case of dysentery as a perfectly natural consequence of the chill which followed; another had just been kicked by a passing mule; and a third had received word that morning that his newly-born child was dead and its mother dangerously ill. The two former were shoved none too gently back into line with what appeared to be the regulation prescription in such cases: "Serves

you right for your carelessness" ; but I thought I saw a note slipped into the third man's hand as the general pressed it in sympathy and promised to see that leave should be arranged for at once.

I was no less struck by the efficacy of this novel system of diagnosis than by the illuminative example its workings presented of the paternal attitude of even the highest of the Alpini officers toward the least of the men under them.

But it is not only the buoyant Alpini who pour out their souls in song. The Italian soldier, no matter from what part of the country he comes or on what sector of the front he is stationed, can no more work or fight without singing than he can without eating. Indeed, a popular song that is heard all along the front relates how, for some reason or other, an order went out to the army that there was to be no more singing in the trenches, and how a soldier, protesting to his officer, exclaimed, "But, captain, if I cannot sing I shall die of sadness ; and surely it is better that I should die fighting the enemy than that I should expire of a broken heart!"

On many a drizzly winter morning, motoring past the painted Sicilian carts which form so important a feature of the Italian transport on the broken hills of the Isonzo front, I noted with

sheer astonishment that the drivers were far and away likelier to be singing than swearing at the mules. To one who has driven mules, or even lived in a country where mules are driven, I shall not need to advance any further evidence of the Sicilian soldier's love of song.

And on that stony trench-torn plateau of the Carso, where men live in caverns under the earth and where the casualties are multiplied two- or three-fold by the fragments of explosive-shattered rock; even there, on this deadliest and most repulsive of all the battle-fronts of Armageddon, the lilting melodies of sunny southern Italy, punctuated, but never for long interrupted, by the shriek and detonation of Austrian shells, are heard on every hand.

There was a trio of blithe rock-breakers that furnished me with one of the most grimly amusing impressions of my visit. It was toward the end of December, and Captain P——, the indefatigable young officer who had me in charge, arranged a special treat in the form of a visit to a magnificent observation-post on the brink of a hill which the Italians had wrested from the Austrians in one of their late advances. We picked our way across some miles of this shell-churned and still uncleared battlefield, and ate our lunch of sandwiches on the parapet of

a trench from which one could follow, with only a few breaks, the course of the Austrian lines in the hills beyond Gorizia, to where they melted into the marshes fringing the sea.

"There's only one objection to this vantage-point," remarked the captain, directing his glass along the lower fringe of the clouds that hung low on the opposite hills. "Unless the weather is fairly thick one is under the direct observation of the Austrians over there for close to an hour, both going and coming. It would hardly be pleasant to come up here if the visibility were really good."

And at that psychological moment the clouds began to lift, the sun came out, and, taking advantage of the first good gunnery weather that had offered for a long time, the artillery of both sides opened up for as lively a bit of practice as any really sober-minded individual could care to be mixed up with. I have seen quieter intervals on the Somme, even during a period when the attack was being sharply pushed. A hulking "305," which swooped down and obliterated a spiny pinnacle of the ridge a few hundred yards farther along, also swept much of the zest out of the sharpening panorama, and signalled, "Time to go!" A large-calibre high-explosive shell is a far more fearsome thing when

rending a crater in the rock of the Carso than when tossing the soft mud of France.

Work was still going on in the half-sheltered *dolinas* or "sink-holes" that pock-marked the grisly plateau; but on the remains of a cart-road which we followed, and which appeared to be the special object of the Austrians' diversion, none seemed to be in sight save a few scattered individuals actively engaged in getting out of sight. It was an illuminating example of the way most of the "natives" appeared to feel about the situation, and we did not saunter any the more leisurely for having had the benefit of it.

We stepped around the riven body of a horse that still steamed from the dying warmth of the inert flesh, and, a little farther on, there was a red puddle in the middle of the road, a black, lazily smoking shell-hole close beside it, with a crisply fresh mound of sod and rock fragment just beyond. A hammer and a dented trench helmet indicated that the man had been cracking up stone for the road when *his* had come.

"One would imagine that they had enough broken stone around here already," observed Captain P—— dryly, glancing back over his shoulder to where a fresh covey of bursting shell was making the sky-line of the stone wall behind

us look like a hedge of pampas plumes in a high wind. "Hope the rest of these poor fellows have taken to their holes. A little dose like we're getting here is only a good appetiser; to stick it out as a steady diet is quite another matter."

Half a minute later we rounded a bend in the stone wall we had been hugging, to come full upon what I have always since thought of as the Anvil Chorus—three men cracking rock to metal the surface of a recently filled shell-hole in the road and singing a lusty song to which they kept time with the rhythmic strokes of their hammers. Dumped off in a heap at one side of the road was what may have been the hastily jettisoned cargo of a half-dozen motor-lorries, which had pussy-footed up there under cover of darkness—several hundred trench-bombs, containing among them enough explosive to have lifted the whole mountain-side off into the valley had a shell chanced to nose-dive into their midst. Two of these stubby little "winged victories" a couple of the singers had appropriated as work-stools. The third of them sat on the remains of a "dud 305," from a broad crack in which a tiny stream of rain-dissolved high explosive trickled out to form a gay saffron pool about his feet. This one was bareheaded, his trench

helmet, full of nuts and dried figs,—evidently from a Christmas package,—lying on the ground within reach of all three men.

The sharp roar of the quickening Italian artillery, the deeper booms of the exploding Austrian shells, and the siren-like crescendo of the flying projectiles so filled the air, that it was not until one was almost opposite the merry trio that he could catch the fascinating swing of the iterated refrain.

"A fine song to dance to, that!" remarked Captain P——, stopping and swinging his shoulders to the time of the air. "You can almost *feel* the beat of it."

"It strikes me as being still better as a song to march to," I rejoined meaningly, settling down my helmet over the back of my neck and suiting the action to the word. "It's undoubtedly a fine song, but it doesn't seem to me quite right to tempt a kind Providence by lingering near this young mountain of trench-bombs any longer than is strictly necessary. If that Austrian battery 'lifts' another notch, something else is going to lift here, and I'd much rather go down to the valley on my feet than riding on a trench-bomb."

The roar of the artillery battle flared up and died down by spells, but the steady throb of the

Anvil Chorus followed us down the wind for some minutes after another bend in the stone wall cut off our view of the singers. How often I have wondered which ones of that careless trio survived that day, or the next, or the one after that ; which, if any, of them is still beating time on the red-brown rocks of the Carso to the air of that haunting refrain !

I was told that the wounded are sometimes located on the battlefield by their singing ; that they not infrequently sing while being borne in on stretchers or transported in ambulances. I had no chance to observe personally instances of this kind, but I did hear, time and time again, men singing in the hospitals, and they were not all convalescents or lightly wounded either. One brave little fellow in that fine British hospital on the Isonzo front, conducted with such conspicuous success by the British Red Cross, I shall never forget.

An explosive bullet had carried away all four fingers of his right hand, leaving behind it an infection which had run into gaseous gangrene. The stump swelled to a hideous mass, about the shape and size of a ten-pound ham, but the doctors were fighting amputation in the hope of saving the wrist and thumb, to have something to which artificial members might be attached.

The crisis was over at the time I visited the hospital, but the whole arm was still so inflamed that the plucky lad had to close his eyes and set his teeth to keep from crying out with agony as the matron lifted the stump to show me the "beautiful healthy red colour" where healing had begun.

The matron had some "splendid" trench-foot cases to show me farther along, and these, with some interesting experiments in disinfection by "irrigation," were engrossing my attention, when a sort of a crooning hum caused me to turn and look at the patient in the bed behind me. It was the "gaseous gangrene" boy again. We had worked down the next row till we were opposite him once more, and in the quarter-hour which had elapsed his nurse had set a basin of disinfectant on his bed in which to bathe his wound. Into this she had lifted the hideously swollen stump and hurried on to her next patient. And there he lay, swaying the repulsive mass of mortified flesh that was still a part of him back and forth in the healing liquid, the while he crooned a little song to it as a mother rocks her child to sleep as she sings a lullaby.

"He always does that," said the nurse, stopping for a moment with her hands full of bandages. "He says it helps him to forget the

pain. And there are five or six others: the worse they feel, the more likely they are to try to sing as a sort of diversion. That big chap over there with the beard,—he's a fisherman from somewhere in the South,—he says that when the shooting pains begin in his frozen feet he has to sing to keep from cursing. Says he doesn't want to curse before the *forestiere* if it can possibly be helped."

On one of my last days on the Italian front I climbed to a shell-splintered peak of the Trentino under the guidance of the son of a famous general, a Mercury-footed flame of a lad who was aide-de-camp to the division commander of that sector. Mounting by an interminable *teleferica* from just above one of the half-ruined towns left behind by the retreating Austrians after their drive of last spring, we threaded a couple of miles of steep zigzagging trail, climbed a hundred feet of ladder and about the same distance of rocky toe-holds,—the latter by means of a knotted rope and occasional friendly iron spikes,—finally to come out on the summit, with nothing between us and an almost precisely similar Austrian position opposite but a half-mile of thin air and the overturned, shrapnel-pitted statue of a saint—

doubtless erected in happier days by the pious inhabitants of —— as an emblem of peace and goodwill. An Italian youth who had returned from New York to fight for his country—he had charge of some kind of mechanical installation in a rock-gallery a few hundred feet beneath our feet—climbed up with us to act as interpreter.

To one peering through the crook in the lead-sheathed elbow of the fallen statue, the roughly squared openings of the rock galleries which sheltered an enemy battery seemed well within fair revolver shot; and, indeed, an Alpino sharpshooter had made a careless Austrian gunner pay the inevitable penalty of carelessness only an hour or two before. One could make one's voice carry across without half an effort.

Just before we started to descend my young guide made a megaphone of his hands, threw his head back, his chest out, and, directing his voice across the seemingly bottomless gulf that separated us from the enemy, sang a few bars of what I took to be a stirring battle-song.

"What is the song the captain sings?" I asked of the New-York-bred youth, whose head was just disappearing over the edge of the cliff as he began to lower himself down the rope. "Something from *William Tell*, isn't it?"

Young "Mulberry Street" dug hard for a

toe-hold, found it, slipped his right hand up till it closed on a comfortable knot above his head, and then, with left leg and left arm swinging free over a 200-foot drop to the terraces below, shouted back,—

"Not on yer life, mista. De capitan he not singa no song. He just tella de Ostrichun datta Italia, she ready fer him. Datta all."

I looked down to the valley where line after line of trenches, fronted with a furry brown fringe that I knew to be rusting barbed wire, stretched out of sight over the divides on either hand, and where, for every gray-black geyser of smoke that marked the bursting of an Austrian shell, a half-dozen vivid flame-spurts, flashing out from unguessed caverns on the mountain-side, told that the compliment was being returned with heavy interest.

"Yes, Italy is ready for them," I thought; and whether she has to hold here and there—as she may—in defence, or whether she goes forward all along the line in triumphant offence—whichever it is, the Italian soldier will go out to the battle with a song on his lips, a song that no bullet which leaves the blood pulsing through his veins and breath in his lungs will have power to stop.

BLOWING UP THE CASTELLETTO

It was about the middle of last July that the laconic Italian bulletin recorded, in effect, that the blowing of the top off a certain mountain in the Dolomite region had been accomplished with complete success, and that a considerable extension of line had been possible as a consequence.

That was about all there was to it, I believe; and yet the wonder engendered by the superb audacity of the thing had haunted me from the first. There was no suggestion of a hint of how it was done, or even why it was done. All that was left to the imagination, and the result—in my own case at least—was the awakening of a burning interest in the ways of the warriors who were wont to throw mountain peaks and fragments of glacier at one another as the everyday plains-bred soldier throws hand-grenades, which, waxing rather than waning as the weeks went by, finally impelled me to attempt a visit to the Austro-Italian Alpine Front at a time of year when the weather conditions threatened to be all but, if not quite, prohibitive.

"With twenty-five degrees of frost at sea-level in France," observed a French officer at Amiens to whom I confided the plan, "what do you expect to find at 10,000 feet on the Tyrol?"

"A number of things which they don't do at sea-level in France or anywhere else," I replied, "but especially *why* they blow the tops off mountain peaks, and *how* they blow the tops off mountain peaks."

Even in Rome and Milan (though there were some who claimed social acquaintance with the Titans who had been conforming Alpine scenery to tactical exigency), they still spoke vaguely of the thing as "*fantastico*" and "*incredibile*," as men might refer to operations in the Mountains of the Moon.

But once in the Zona di Guerra, with every rift in the lowering cloud-blanket that so loves to muffle the verdant plain of Venezia in its moist folds revealing (in the imminent loom of the snowy barrier rearing itself against the cobalt of the northern sky) evidence that the "mountain-top" part of the story had at least some foundation of fact, whether the "blowing off" part did or not, things took on a different aspect. On my very first day at General Headquarters I met officers who claimed to have seen with their own eyes a mountain whose top had been

blown off; indeed, they even mentioned the names of the *montagna mutilati*, showed me where they were on the map, pointed out the strategical advantages which had already accrued from taking them, and those which might be expected to accrue later.

They were still there, I was assured, even if their tops had been blown off. They were still held by the Alpini. Two of the most important of them were not so far away; indeed, both could be plainly seen from where we were—if other and nearer mountains did not stand between, and, of course, if the accursed storm-clouds would only lift. And so, at last, the names of Castelletto and Col di Lano took sharpened shape as something more than mystic symbols.

"But can I not go and see them?" I asked. "You have told me *why* you blew them up, but not *how;* yet that is the very thing that I came out to find about at first hand."

They shook their heads dubiously. "Not while this weather lasts," one of them said. "It has snowed in the Alps every day for over a month. The *valangas* are coming down everywhere, and (even if you were willing to risk being buried under one of them) the roads in places will not be open for weeks. You might wait here

a month or so, and even then be disappointed so far as getting about on the Alpine Front is concerned. Best see what you can of the Isonzo Front now and come back for the Alps in the spring."

That seemed to settle it so far as seeing the Castelletto and Col di Lano was concerned. Regarding the way in which they were mined, however, one of the officers at the Ufficio Stampa said that he would endeavour to arrange to have the Castelletto—much the greater operation of the two—report put at my disposal, as well as a set of photographs which had been taken to show the progress of this mighty work.

"We have never given out any of the photographs before," he said, "and only portions of the report; but since you came to Italy on purpose to learn about the mountain whose top was blown off, the Comando Supremo may be moved to make a special dispensation in your favour."

Exclusive permission to make use of both report and photographs was granted me in due time, and since the former makes clear both the "why" and the "how" of the unprecedented Castelletto operation, it will perhaps be best to summarise it first as a sort of drab background for the more vivid and intimate personal details

which a lucky turn of the fitful weather vane made it possible for me to obtain later.

The first part of the report, by the Colonel commanding the Alpini Group, makes plain why the mining of the Castelletto became a *sine quâ non* to further progress in this important sector.

"In the month of October, 1915," he writes, "I was charged with the carrying out of an attack with two battalions of Alpini against the positions of Castelletto and Forcella Bois. This was the fourth time, if I am not mistaken, that an attempt on these positions had been made. In spite of the fact that the artillery preparation of the opening day had been excellently performed I discovered, on the evening of October 17, when I moved with my troops to the attack, that its work had been absolutely of no avail.

"Having received orders at midnight to proceed to Vervei, where the two battalions above mentioned were to take part in another operation, I was forced to abandon the attack. I am convinced, however, that I would not have succeeded in capturing the Castelletto position."

"As known," the report continues, "the Castelletto is a sort of a spur of the Tofana (about 12,000 feet high), with a balcony shaped like a horse-shoe, and with a periphery consisting

of numerous jagged peaks. In the rear of the balcony, and within this rocky spur, the enemy had excavated numerous caverns in which machine-guns and light artillery pieces, handled by isolated but able gun-crews, furnished an invisible and almost impregnable position of defence, giving extraordinary confidence and encouragement to the small forces occupying them.

"Costeana Valley was accordingly at the mercy of the enemy's offence and actually cut in two. From Vervei on, all movements of troops had to be carried on only at night and with great difficulty. The conquest of the Castelletto was rendered necessary not only for tactical but for moral reasons as well, since our troops came to regard it as absolutely imperative that such an obstacle should be overcome. After completing my observations and researches regarding the Castelletto position, I reached the conclusion that the only means of dislodging the enemy therefrom was to blow it up.

"On November 19 I formally presented my plan to Headquarters, and about the middle of December I was authorised to attempt it. The unusual enterprise was a most difficult one, not only on account of its magnitude, but also on account of the particularly unfavourable con-

ditions of the winter season. Having prepared the necessary material for construction and excavation work, I began, on January 3, 1916, fortifying the position (entirely unprotected at the time) from which we would have to work, and completing the construction of the necessary buildings.

"Second Lieutenant Malvezzi, in his report on the subject, describes concisely and modestly the development of the work. The accomplishment of the enterprise, considered by many as chimerical, is due not only to the technical ability of Lt. Malvezzi, and Lt. Tissi, his assistant, but to their special military qualifications as well; also to the courage and goodwill of the Alpini who, in a very short time, became a *personnel* of able miners and clever mechanics.

"The vicissitudes during more than six months' work, at a distance of only a few metres from the enemy, and under an incessant artillery fire and shelling by *bombardas*, could well form the subject for a book devoted to the study of character. Although fully aware of the attendant dangers, including those of falling rocks due to the counter-mining of the enemy, the Alpini of the Castelletto, during the period of more than six months, gave proofs of brilliant valour and unflinching perseverance. They were

calm at all times, and moved only by the spirit of duty.

"In transmitting to Your Excellency the enclosed copy of the report compiled exclusively by Lt. Malvezzi (Lt. Tissi is at present lying wounded in the hospital), I desire to recommend to you these two officers (both as excellent engineers and brave soldiers), as well as the Alpini who were co-operating with them. Without any exaggeration, I consider their achievement as absolutely marvellous, both on account of the great technical difficulties surmounted and the military results obtained. The Austrian officers taken prisoner unanimously confirm the fact that only by springing a mine could the Italians have taken this position so important to the enemy."

* * * *

Lt. Malvezzi's appended report launched at once into the "how" of the titanic task which was set for him.

"On January 3, 1916," he writes, "work was begun on the approach to Castelletto, on the Tofana di Roches slope, levelling the soil and enabling the construction of lodging quarters for officers and troops. This work required the cutting of 660 cubic metres of rock. Next the construction of quarters, and the concealing them

was quickly accomplished. Finally, there was garrisoned at this post the Castelletto Detachment, commonly called the 'T. K.,' consisting of the necessary *personnel* for labour and the defence of the position.

"Our first work was to examine and disclose the enemy lines of communication about the Castelletto and Tofana sides, and to gain full knowledge of their position in detail. In order to accomplish this, observation points were established which allowed us to carry out such investigation and to make topographical sketches of the zone. Being as we were always in the proximity of the enemy, this was a long and fatiguing work. After a month, however, we succeeded in constructing a series of positions at short distances from those of the enemy (from 50 to 150 metres). These were provided with cables and rope ladders to enable us the more rapidly and easily to study (from all possible points of vantage) the enemy's positions and the development of his works.

"The topographic work was begun by taking as a plan metric base measurement 116 metres of ground on a four-triangle table, which method enabled making all other drawings based on it. By basing our findings on this table, we were able to draw up a series of points of the enemy's

positions. Using the method of successive intersections, we thus obtained all points of interest to us, as regards direction, distance and height.

" In addition to this work, executed with the greatest care and accuracy, we made two independent drawings of the enemy's positions by simpler but less exact methods. The first was made with a topographic compass and Abney level ; the other with a Monticole field-square. By these means we obtained excellent checks on the base system, and so grounded our work entirely on the trigonometric table and on the drawings by intersections.

" From the middle of February to the end of March the tools used for piercing consisted only of mallets and chisels. Our progress was necessarily slow, yet it was sufficient in this time to give us, besides 14 metres of tunnel, room for installing the perforating machinery. At the end of March, notwithstanding heavy snowstorms, the machinery—some pieces of it weighed as much as 500 and 600 kilos—for beginning work was installed. This was all brought up by hand, and without incident.

" The mechanical work was begun on April 2. We utilised two plant as follows :

" (1) A complete group of benzo-compressors, consisting of a 30-40 horse-power kerosene motor

adjusted to a Sullivan compressor by means of a belt. This machinery was installed, on a solid base of cement, at the beginning of the tunnel, in a 5 × 8 metre space dug out in the side of the mountain for that purpose.

"(2) An Ingersoll compressor mounted on a four-wheel truck.

"Both machines were of American manufacture, and gave complete satisfaction at all times. Each compressed the air to a density of about seven atmospheres, injecting it into an air-chamber, whence, by means of a rigid tube, ending in one of flexible rubber, it was conveyed to the respective drills.

"Four squads worked at a time, each one consisting of a foreman and from 25 to 30 miners. Each squad worked six hours without interruption. This shift, apparently light, was found, on the contrary, to be very heavy, owing principally to the development of nitric gases which poisoned the air, and to the dust caused by the drills.

"At first the only explosive used was military gelatine; later, dynamite-gelatine. The system of over-charging the holes was always adopted, in order to reduce the *débris* to minute particles, easier to be transported and unloaded. The work was carried on in sections, varying from 1·80

by 1·80 metres to 2 by 2. The flat stretches of the tunnel were laid with Decauville rails. All material was carried out in cars and dumped into a hopper discharging into a large pipe. (The dump was accumulated at a point beyond the observation of the Austrians.) The average rate of progress was 5·10 metres per day."

It may be well to explain here that it was not possible to begin tunnelling on the same level at which the mine was to be exploded, but considerably more than 150 feet below that level. The tunnel, had, therefore, to be driven on a steep gradient. Another point which the report does not make clear should be borne in mind, viz. that the tunnel divided in the heart of the Castelletto, the main bore being driven on to where the mine was to be exploded, while a smaller branch—referred to below as the "Loop-holed Tunnel"—was run up to a point where favourable exit could be obtained for charging into and occupying the crater of the exploded mine. In all 507 metres of tunnel had to be driven, involving the excavation of 2,200 cubic metres of rock. The details of this work are given in the report as follows:

(A) Chamber for Sullivan Compressor: Dimensions: 5 × 8 metres; average height 2·20 metres.

(B) First part of gallery to second dump of material. Length 72 metres; inclination 38·70 per cent.; elevation gained 25·90 metres.

(C) Second dump of material, established in order to free space for further work and reduce the length of transportation.

(D) Ingersoll Group chamber. Dimensions: 4 × 6·50 metres; average height 2 metres.

(E) Cut from the gallery of the second dump of material to the beginning of the ascent to the mining chamber. Length 136 metres; inclination 4·70 per cent.; elevation gained 6·40 metres.

(F) Ascent to mining chamber. Length 22 metres; inclination 36·30 per cent.; elevation gained 10·75 metres. (This ascent, in order to facilitate tamping, was worked by dividing it into three sections of 1 × 1·60 metres, at nearly right angles.)

(G) Mining chamber. Dimensions: 5 × 5·50 metres; average height 2·30 metres.

(H) Loop-holed tunnel. Length 162 metres; inclination 60 per cent.; elevation gained 83·50 metres in this tunnel itself, or a total of 168·50 from the second dump. This tunnel (the one through which the men were to pass for the attack after the explosion of the mine) had to be strictly confined to the rocky stratum between

the Tofana and the Castelletto; its planimetry appears (see map), therefore, rather uneven due to the constant elevation of the rock.

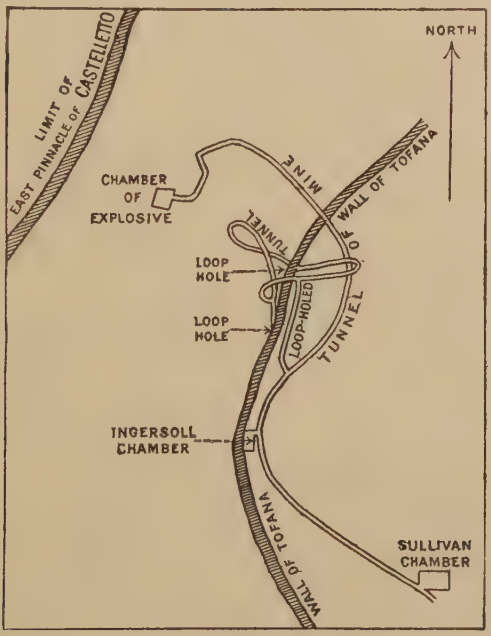
(I) Line of communication—partly in a natural cavern—measuring about 250 metres in length and giving access from the lodging quarters to the works.

(J) Tunnel dug out to the extreme south end of the Castelletto, 30 metres long, with two port-holes (each 4 metres wide) for two Depfort guns, with closed cavern for the guns and ammunition.

"It was originally intended to divide the explosive charge between two chambers, each having a mining line of resistance of 20 metres, with a 16-ton explosive charge of 92 per cent. gelatine. However, owing to the counter-mining work carried on by the enemy—we were only a few metres from one of his positions during the charging of the mine chamber—we were obliged to confine the entire charge to a single chamber.

"The enemy meanwhile, with a view to avoiding the effects of our mine beneath the peaks of the Castelletto, had transferred most of his shelters to the side of the Tofana and the Selletta. This necessitated a considerable alteration in the location of the mine as originally planned, in order that it should act against the

enemy shelters on both the Castelletto and Tofana flanks.



PLAN OF THE CASTELLETO MINING OPERATION.

The worm-like tunnel on the left had to be driven in this way in order to avoid fissures in the rock which would have revealed what was going on. It was this tunnel through which the Alpini were to pass to occupy the crater after the explosion of the mine, but this plan was defeated through the presence of gas from detonated Austrian asphyxiating bombs.

"The charge was computed on a basis of minimum resistance of 20 metres, taking into

consideration the nature of the rock (which was fissured) and the existence of numerous splits and caverns. The co-efficient of overcharge was, therefore, rather high. In order to obtain the maximum effect under these conditions, only 92 per cent. explosive nitro-glycerine was used. The total charge was 35 tons.

"The method of priming adopted was suggested by Lieut.-Col. Tatoli, of the Engineers Corps. This consisted of five priming groups, each of three friction tubes. One of the groups ran along the central axis of the chamber, while the other four, parallel with the first, were disposed symmetrically facing the four corners of the chamber. Each tube ($1\frac{1}{4}$ inches inside diameter by 4·50 metres in length) was alternately charged with gelatine and gun-cotton and pierced by picric acid detonating fuse, ending in a gun-cotton cartridge with electric percussion cap. In the very centre of the charge there were inserted two cases of gun-cotton, with electric percussion cap and detonating fuse, with a view to securing a second springing of the mine to follow the first.

"We thus had in all seventeen electric circuits divided into three groups, each formed by the circuits of five tubes, connected with the five groups of friction tubes. Two of these electric

groups were composed of six circuits each, by adding the two circuits of the above-mentioned cases containing the gun-cotton. Each of these electric groups ended with a Cantone exploder, placed at about 4·50 metres distance from the mine-chamber.

"The tamping was effected with cement and with sandbags, with heavy wooden beams between the latter. It was made more effective by dividing into sections at right angles to each other. The theoretical length of the tamping was 25 metres.

"The charging of the mine chamber began July 3 1916, at 5 p.m., and was completed at 3 p.m. of July 9 this work including tamping, priming and laying of electric circuits. The final connections between the latter and the exploders, by means of wires suspended in the air, were made on July 10. The mine was sprung on July 11 at 3.30 p.m., and responded fully to our calculations and expectations.

"(Signed) L. Malvezzi,
2nd Lieut. 7th Regiment Alpini."

* * * *

A week of unspeakable weather went by—an interval the days of which I spent among the "Cave-men" of the Carso, and the nights of which were largely devoted to puzzling through

the mysteries of the Castelletto report with the aid of my Italian dictionary—and then the unexpected miracle happened. Rain and snow ceased, the sky cleared, and a spell of sparkling days succeeded the interminable months of storm and lowering clouds. From the high Alps came word that the grip of the frost had paralysed the avalanches for the moment, and that rapid progress was being made in opening up the roads for traffic.

"Now is your chance to see the Castelletto," they told me at headquarters. "If you start at once you ought to be able to get through without much trouble; and, if the weather holds good, you may even be able to get back without long delay, though on that score you'll have to take your chances. Doubtless they will be able to get you out in some way whatever happens."

And so it chanced that on a diamond-bright morning in early January I found myself, after a couple of days of strenuous motoring, speeding in a military car past the old custom-house and up into the heart of that most weirdly grand of all Alpine regions, the Dolomites. Already we were well over into what had once been Austrian territory, and the splintered pinnacles which notched the skyline ahead of us were, as my escorting officer explained, held in part by both

the Italians and the enemy. As we coasted down into Cortina di Ampezzo—which in its swarming tourist hotels of motley design rivals St. Moritz or Chamonix—Capt. P—— pointed to where a clean-lined wall of snow-capped yellow rock reared itself against the deep purple of the western sky.

"That high mountain ridge is the Tofana *massif*," he said, "and that partly isolated mass of lighter-coloured rock (crowned with towers like a mediæval stronghold) at its further end is what is left of the famous Castelletto. It is twenty kilometres or more away, but you can see even from here how it dominated the valley and road, the latter the much-pictured Dolomite road, which is also a route of great military importance.

"Now look at the end of the Castelletto toward the wall of the Tofana. Do you see where it seems to have been sliced off smoothly at an angle of about forty-five degrees? Well, that is the part they blew off last July. Up to then that end like the other, was crowned with a lofty spire. That spire, the base from which it sprung, the Austrian barracks and munition depôts, together with the men stationed there —all were blown up and destroyed in the explosion.

"Take a good look at it while you have a chance, for the skyline view is better from a distance than from close at hand, where we shall go this afternoon if the way is open. To see the effect of the explosion at its best," he added, "one should look at it from the Austrian lines, as it was the blowing out of the other side of the mountain which undermined and let down the top. If you come back here in the spring doubtless we will be in occupation of a number of interesting observation points over there."

Viewed even from a distance of a dozen miles or more the alteration wrought in the skyline by the explosion was not difficult to imagine. It was, indeed, literally true—what I had never been fully able to make myself believe until that moment—that a mountain peak had been blown off—hundreds of feet of it, and thousands of tons. My eyes remained focussed in awed fascination on the unnaturally even profile of the wound until our snorting car skidded round a bend of the frozen road and the thick-growing pine forest shut it from sight.

It was not until, after ten miles of precarious climbing and clawing up the ice-paved, snow-walled road, our car brought up in the midst of a neat little group of Alpine buildings nestling in the protection of the last of the timber, that

Capt. P—— revealed the surprise that had been prepared for me.

"Our host here," he said, "will be Colonel X——, who conceived and directed the Castelletto project, and at dinner to-night you will meet, and can talk as long as you like, with Lieutenant Malvezzi, who did the work. He is still quartered here, and will be glad to tell you all that he can about Alpine military engineering. We have already sent him word that you came to Italy expressly to see him."

After a hasty lunch Capt. P—— and I, accompanied by an officer of Alpini from the camp, started for the Castelletto. Our powerful military car, which, in spite of the fact that it had non-skid tyres, had been giving a good deal of trouble on the ice, was left behind, and a smaller but heavily-engined machine, with sharp spikes clamped over the rims to grip the glassy surface of the road, was taken for the few miles of the latter which were still open. Abandoning this in a snow-bank at a little advanced camp well up under the towering wall of the Tofana, we took our alpenstocks and started on the 2,000-foot climb up to the base of the Castelletto.

The hard-packed snow on the thirty to forty degree slope must have averaged from ten to twenty feet deep all the way, while, for a half-

mile or so midway, it was humped up in crumpled fold where, a fortnight before, one of the largest and most terrible slides ever known in the Alps had plunged down on its sinister mission to the bottom of the valley. The full story of that avalanche will hardly be told until after the war.

Slightly softened by the brilliant sun, the snow gave good footing; but even so it was a stiff pull to the little ice and rock-begirt barracks at the base of the cliff, and I gained some idea of the titanic labour involved in getting guns, munitions, machinery, food, and thirty-five tons of high explosive up there, all by hand, in every sort of weather, and much of it (to avoid enemy observation and fire) at night.

Midwinter was not, of course, the time to see anything of the real effects of the great explosion, for the huge crater torn by the latter was drifted full of snow, and snow was also responsible for the complete obliteration of the countless thousands of tons of *débris* that had been precipitated down the mountain side. A dizzy climb up the ladder-like stairway, and a crawling clamber through a hundred yards of the winding tunnel from the rock chambers which had housed the compressors, revealed about all that was visible at the time of the preparations and consequences

of the mighty work ; but a peep from the observation port of a certain cunningly concealed gun-cavern discovered a panorama which gave illuminative point to the concluding words of the artillery officer who, pointing with the shod handle of an ice-pick, explained the situation to me from that vantage.

" So you see," he had said, " that the Castelletto in the enemy's hands was a stone wall which effectually barred our further progress ; while in our hands it becomes a lever which—whenever we really need to take them—will pry open for us positions of vital importance. We simply *had* to have it ; and so we took it in the one way it could be taken.

* * * *

Save for his Alpini uniform Lieutenant Malvezzi, when I met him at dinner that evening, might well have passed for the typical musician of drama or romance. His skin and hair and eyes were dark and his long nervous fingers flitted over the paper on which he sketched various phases of the Castelletto work very much as those of a pianist flit above his ivory keys. The dreamy, far-away look in his eyes was also suggestive of the musician, but that I had long come to recognise as equally characteristic of all great engineers, the men whose tangible

achievements are only the fruition of days and nights of dreaming.

"Where shall I begin the story?" he had asked as the diners in the regimental mess began to resolve into little knots of threes and fours over coffee and cigars; and I had suggested that he take it up where his report left off. "That stopped just as things began to happen" I said. "Now tell what *did* happen."

The Tenente laughed a laugh suggestive of rueful reminiscence, and a smile ran round among those of the officers who had heard and understood my words. "So far as I am concerned," he replied, "that covers about five minutes of activity—five minutes for which we had been preparing for six months. You understand that we had constructed a branch tunnel through which our men were to rush and occupy the crater as soon after the explosion as possible.

"*Ecco.* The men were all massed ready on and under the terrace, and nothing remained but the making of the connection firing the mine. I took one long look around and then threw over the electric switch closing the circuit. Every one seemed to be holding his breath as he waited. One, two, three seconds passed in a silence so intense that I heard the sharp 'ping' of the water dripping from the roof of the

chamber and striking the pool it had formed below.

"Then, before any other sound was audible, the whole mountain gave a quick convulsive jerk, strong enough to throw some of the men off their feet. A heavy grinding rumble in the earth came with a shivering that followed the jerk, but the real roar of the explosion (from the outside) was not audible for a second or two later. Only those watching from a distance of several kilometres saw the right-hand pinnacle of the Castelletto give a sudden heave, and then sink out of sight in a cloud of dust and smoke.

"In addition to the honour of firing the mine that of leading my men into the crater had also been reserved for me, and as soon as I heard the roar of the explosion I gave the order for them to follow me up into the tunnel. Well ——" he paused and ran his laughing eyes around the grinning circle of his fellow officers, "that is about as far as my evidence is good for anything. As I went clambering up the slippery steps of the tunnel an almost solid wall of choking fumes struck me in the face, and I—and all of my men except those near or outside of the portal—dropped coughing in my tracks."

"Had the mine blown back through the tamping?" I asked.

"Not exactly," he replied, his rueful smile becoming almost sheepish, as of one who had allowed himself to become the victim of a prank. "The Austrians had a big store of asphyxiating bombs on hand to use against us, and these, exploded by our mine, vented their spite on friend and foe alike. We were not able to occupy the crater for twenty-four hours.

"I am glad to say that I spent what would otherwise have been an intolerably anxious interval unconscious in the hospital. By the time I had been revived a friendly breeze had thinned the gas sufficiently to allow our Alpini to move into the crater and reap—in spite of the delay—every advantage we had at any time counted upon from the operation. Our most cherished capture was the 'perforator'—practically intact—with which the Austrians were driving an almost completed counter-mine directly under us."

"The nervous tension must have been rather strong toward the end, wasn't it?" I asked; "especially when you knew the enemy had at last got your work definitely located and was rushing his counter-mine?"

The smile of whimsical ruefulness died out of the dark sensitive face, leaving behind it lines I had not noticed before—lines that only come

on young faces after weeks or months of incessant anxiety. The backward cast shadows of a time of terrible memory were lurking behind his eyes as he replied :

" For seven days and nights before the mine was sprung neither I nor the officers working with me slept or even rested from work."

That was all he said ; but I saw the eyes—brimming with ready sympathy—of his fellow officers turn to where he sat, and knew the time for light questionings was past. Not until that moment did a full appreciation of the travail involved in the blowing up of the Castelletto sink home to me, and I nodded fervent assent to the words of the English-educated Captain of Alpini next me when he observed that " Malvezzi's little 'Order of Savoie' was jolly well earned, eh ? "

WONDERS OF THE TELEFERICA

"JOLLY good work, I call that, for a 'basket on a string,'" was the way a visiting British officer characterised an exploit of the Italians in the course of which—in lieu of any other way of doing it—they had shot the end of a cable from a gun across a flooded river and thus made it possible to rig up a *teleferica* for rushing over some badly-needed reinforcements.

The name is not a high-sounding one, but I do not know of any other which so well describes the wonderful contrivance which played so important a part in enabling the Italians to hold successfully their three hundred miles and more of high Alpine front during the first two years they were in the war. And in this connection it should be borne well in mind that the Austrians never were able to break through upon the Alpine front, where—until the *débâcle* upon the Upper Isonzo—the Italians, peak by peak, valley by valley, were slowly but surely pushing the enemy backward all along the line. Nor should it be forgotten that up to the very last the Alpini had their traditional foe mastered

along all that hundred and fifty miles of sky-line positions—from the Carnic Alps, through the Dolomites to the Trentino—which ultimately had to be abandoned only because their rear was threatened by the Austro-German advance along the Friulian plain from the Isonzo. The loss of this line under these conditions, therefore, detracts no whit from the magnificent military skill and heroism by which they were won and held.

The Italians' conduct of their Alpine campaign must remain a supreme classic of mountain warfare—something which has never been approached in the past and may never be equalled in the future. According to the most approved pre-war strategy, the proper way to defend mountain lines was by implanting guns on the heights commanding the main passes and thus rendering it impossible for an enemy to traverse them. The fact that these commanding positions were in turn dominated by still higher ones, and these latter by others, until the loftiest summits of the Alps were reached, was responsible for the struggle for the "sky-line" positions which the Austro-Italian war quickly resolved itself into.

This kind of war would have been a sheer impossibility two decades ago, from the simple

fact that no practicable means of transport existed capable of carrying men, munitions, guns and food up to continuous lines of positions from ten thousand to thirteen thousand feet above sea-level. The one thing that made the feat possible was the development of the aerial tramway, or the *teleferica*, as the Italians call it, which gave transport facilities to points where the foot of man had scarcely trod before. Regular communication with the highest mountain-top positions would have been absolutely out of the question without this ingenious device.

As I have said, the "basket-on-a-string" description fits the *teleferica* exactly, for the principle is precisely similar to that of the contrivance by which packages are shunted around in the large stores and factories. The only points which differentiate it in the least from the overhead ore-tramways is the fact that—in its latest and highest development—it is lighter and more dependable. For the ore-tramway—always built in a more or less protected position—had only the steady grind of the day's work to withstand; the *teleferica* has not only the daily wear and tear racking it to pieces, but is also in more or less perennial peril of destruction by flood, wind, and avalanches, to say nothing of the fire of the enemy's artillery or of bombs

from his aeroplanes. That the Italians have evolved a contrivance more or less proof against the ravages of these destructive agents is, perhaps, the best evidence of their genius for military engineering. Nothing more perfect in its way than the *teleferica* has been produced by any of the belligerents.

Theoretically, a *teleferica* can be of any length, though I think the longest on the Italian front is one of three or four miles, which makes a good part of the eight-thousand-foot climb up to the summit of the Pasubio, in the Trentino, and which—at the time of writing—is still in Italian hands. The cable may run on a level—as when it spans some great gorge between two mountain peaks—or it may be strung up to any incline not too great to make precarious the grip of the grooved overhead wheels of the basket. I was not able to learn what this limit is, but I have never seen a cable run at an angle of over forty-five degrees. Wherever a cable does not form a single great span it has to be supported at varying intervals by running over steel towers to prevent its sagging too near the earth.

A *teleferica* has never more than its two terminal stations. If the topography of a mountain is such that a continuous cable cannot be run the whole distance that it is desired to bridge

by *teleferica*, two—or even three or four—separate installations are built. This is well illustrated in the ascent of the Adamello, the highest position on the Austro-Italian front. One goes to the lower station of the first *teleferica* by motor, if the road is not blocked by slides. At the upper station of this two-mile-long cableway a tramcar pulled by a mule is taken for the journey over three or four miles of practically level narrow-gauge railway. Leaving this, a hundred-yard walk brings one to another *teleferica*, in the basket of which he is carried to its upper station, on the brow of a great cliff towering a sheer three thousand feet above the valley below. Three hundred yards farther up another *teleferica* begins, which lands him by the side of the frozen lake at Rifugio Garibaldi. Three more *telefericas*—with breaks between each—and a dog-sled journey figure in the remainder of the climb to the glacier and summit of the Adamello.

The engine of a *teleferica*—its power varies according to the weight and capacity of its basket and the height and length of the lift—is always installed at the upper station. The usual provision is for two baskets, one coming up while the other goes down. As with the ore-tramways, however, an installation can be made

—if sufficient power is available—to carry two or three or even a greater number of baskets. As this puts a great strain on the cableway the Italians have only resorted to it at a few points where the pressure on the transport is very heavy.

The two greatest enemies of the *teleferica* are the avalanche and the wind—the latter because it may blow the baskets off the cable, and the former because it may carry the whole thing away. As the tracks of snow-slides—the points at which they are most likely to occur—are fairly well defined, it is usually possible to make a wide span across the danger-zone with the cable and thus minimise the chance of disaster on this score. It is only when the dread *valanga* —as occasionally happens—is launched at some unexpected point that damage may be done to an aerial tramway. A great slide—perhaps the worst which has occurred on the Italian side of the lines during the war—which came down, a mile wide, from the summit of the Tofana *massif* to the Dolomite road in the valley five miles below, carried away a block of barracks and a battery of mountain guns, in addition to burying a considerable length of *teleferica* a hundred feet deep in snow and *débris*. Visiting this slide in December, 1916, a few days after

it happened, I saw—at a point where a cut had been run in an endeavour to save some of the several hundred Alpini who had been buried—the twisted tower of the *teleferica*, inextricably mixed up with the body of a mule and a gun-carriage and overlaid with a solid stratum of forest trees, two miles below the point at which it had formerly stood.

Though the number of disasters of this kind from avalanches may be counted upon one's fingers, trouble from high wind is always an imminent possibility. In the early days of the *teleferica* accidents traceable to the blowing off of the baskets were fairly common ; in fact, it was feared for a time that the difficulty from this source might be so great as materially to limit the usefulness of the cableway system. The use of more deeply-grooved wheels, however, did away with this trouble almost entirely, so that now the only menace from the wind is when it comes from " abeam " and blows hard enough to swing the baskets into collision when passing each other in mid-air.

Though I have had many a *teleferica* journey that was distinctly thrilling—what ride through the air on a swaying wire, with a torrent or an avalanche below, and perhaps shells hurtling through the clouds above, would not be thrilling?

—I have never figured in anything approaching an accident, and only once in an experience which might even be described as "ticklish." This latter occurred through my insistence on making an ascent in a *teleferica* on a day when there was too much wind to allow it to operate in safety. It was on the Adamello in the course of an ascent which I endeavoured to make toward the end of last July.

There was a sinister turban of black clouds wrapped around the summit of the great peak, and before we were half-way up what had only been a cold rain in the lower valley was turning into driving sleet and snow. We ascended by the first *teleferica*—a double one—without difficulty, but the ominous swaying of the cables warned us that the next line, which was more exposed, might be quite another matter. This latter is the one I have mentioned as running from an Alpine meadow to the brow of a cliff towering three thousand feet above it. It was one of the longest—if not the longest—unsupported cable-spans on the whole Alpine front. It was also the steepest of which I had had any experience. The fact that it was exposed throughout its whole length to a strong wind which blew down from an upper valley was responsible for putting it "out of business" during bad weather

and thus made it the weak link in the attenuated chain of the Adamello's communications.

As we had feared, we found this *teleferica* "closed down" upon our arrival at the lower station, ample reason for which appeared in the fifteen or twenty-foot sway given to the parallel lines of cable by the powerful "side-on" wind gusts which assailed it every few moments from the direction of the glacier. Fortunately, as the storm was only coming in fitful squalls as yet and had not settled down to a steady blow, the *tenente* in charge thought that it might be possible to send us up in one of the quieter intervals.

"There's no danger of the baskets blowing off the cable," he said; "it's only a matter of preventing them striking one another in passing, of which there is always risk when the wires are swaying too much."

As there were three of us and the carrying capacity of the basket was limited to two hundred kilos, it was necessary to attempt two trips. As the heaviest of the party, it was decided that I should ride alone, starting after the two others had gone up. Taking advantage of a brief quiet spell, my companions were started off. There was still a good deal of sway to the cables, but a look-out above kept the engineer advised as

to conditions as the baskets approached each other, and the passage was made without incident. When my turn came to start, however, the storm had settled down to a steady gale, and the *tenente* said he did not dare take the responsibility of trying to send me through. Ordinarily I should have been only too ready to acquiesce in his ruling, but as my companions had just 'phoned word that they were going on by the next *teleferica*—a comparatively-protected one—to the Rifugio Garibaldi, where they would await me before starting on the following stage of the ascent, I realised at once that my failure to appear would throw out the whole itinerary and make the trip (which had to be finished that day or not at all) a complete failure. It was plainly up to me to get through if there was any way of doing it, and I accordingly suggested to the young officer that I would gladly sign a written statement taking the whole responsibility for an accident on my own shoulders.

"That would not help either you or me very much if things happened to go wrong," he said, with a laugh. "If you really must go, you must; that is all, and we shall simply do our best not to have any trouble. I shall send one of the linemen along with you to fend off the

other basket in case it swings into yours in passing. There is a returned American here who ought to be able to do the job and talk to you in your native tongue at the same time."

And so it was arranged. I took my place—lying on my back in the bottom of the basket—as usual, after which Antonio—grinning delightedly at the prospect of keeping watch and ward over a "fellow-countryman"—climbed in and knelt between my feet, facing up the line. Then the "starter" banged three times on the cable to let the engineer at the top know that all was ready, and presently we were off along the singing wire.

The ordinary motion of a *teleferica* is not unlike that of an aeroplane—though it is not quite so smooth and vastly slower. On this occasion, however, the swaying of the cable furnished a new sensation which, while mildly suggestive of the sideslip of an aeroplane on a steep "bank," was rather more like the "yawing" of a "sausage" observation balloon in a heavy wind. The swinging of the basket itself was also a good deal more violent than I had ever experienced before, though at no time great enough to make it difficult to keep one's place. Both motions were, of course, at their worst out toward the middle of the span, so that one

had an opportunity to get used to them gradually in the quarter of an hour which elapsed before that point was reached.

I took the occasion to ask Antonio a question I had been making a point of putting to every *teleferica* man I had a chance to talk with. "Is it really true," I said, "that no one has been killed since the war began while riding in a *teleferica?*"

"A large number of men have been injured," he replied; "but no one has been killed outright," and he went on to tell of a friend of his who had coasted down a thousand feet because the pulling-cable jerked loose from the place where it was attached to the basket when the latter had fouled a "down" basket in passing. He was badly injured from the jolt he received when the basket brought up short at the bottom, and it had taken three months in the hospital to put him right again. He would never walk again without a stick, but he was so far from being killed that he was the engineer of the very *teleferica* on which we were riding. He was a very careful man, said Antonio, for he fully understood the consequences of letting two loaded baskets bump in mid-air.

A chill current of spray began to enfold us at this juncture, and Antonio was just in the midst

of an explanation of how it was carried by the wind from a thousand-foot-high quarter-mile-distant waterfall coming down behind the curtain of the lowering clouds, when I suddenly saw him bring the point of his alpenstock over the edge of the basket and, with his eyes fixed intently ahead, hold himself poised in an attitude of tense readiness. Just above our heads the descending basket was swaying to and fro in the strong wind. A collision seemed imminent when, with a quick lunge of his alpenstock, Antonio turned it aside, and in that fraction of a second we passed it unharmed. It had been easy this time, explained Antonio, because the engineer at the top had slowed down the baskets to under half-speed at the moment of their passing.

All sorts of freight—from ducks and donkeys to shells and cannon—have been carried by the *teleferica*, and one of the best stories I heard on the Italian front had to do with a pig—the mascot of a battalion of Alpini holding a lofty position on a Dolomite glacier—which found its way up there by means of the cable. He was a sucking-pig, and was sent up alive to be reared for the major's Christmas dinner, when the *teleferica* basket in which he was travelling got stuck in a drift which had encroached upon

one of the steel towers. Twelve hours elapsed before it was shovelled free, and the sucking-pig, when it finally reached the top, was frozen as hard and stiff as one of his cold-storage brothers. It was only after he had lain in the hot kitchen for several hours that an indignant grunt revealed the astonishing fact that his armour of fat had kept smouldering a spark of life. They reared him on a bottle, and at the time I saw him he was a hulking porker of two hundred pounds or more, drawing a regular ration of his own. They called him *Tedesco*—on account of his face and figure rather than his disposition, they said—but all the same, I would be willing to wager that, if that brave battalion of Alpini were able to save anything more than their rifles and their eagle-plumes in their retreat, he was not allowed to fall into the hands of his brother *Tedeschi* from the other side of the Alps.

But the most noteworthy service of the *teleferica* is the way in which it facilitates the handling of the wounded at points where other ways of transporting them are either too dangerous or too slow. It was on a sector of the upper Isonzo, where at that time the Austrians had not yet been pushed across the river. A rather wide local attack was on at the moment,

and to care the more expeditiously for the wounded a very remarkable little mobile ambulance—the whole equipment of which could be taken down in the morning, packed upon seven motor lorries, moved from fifty to a hundred miles, and be set up and ready for work the same evening—had been pushed up many miles inside the zone of fire to such protection as the "lee" of a high ridge afforded.

"We have found," said the chief surgeon, "that many wounds hitherto regarded as fatal are only so as a consequence of delay in operating upon them. This little hospital unit, which is so complete in equipment that it can do a limited amount of every kind of work that any base hospital can perform, was designed for the express purpose of giving earlier attention to wounds of this kind, principally those of the abdomen. From the first we saved a great number of men who would otherwise never have survived to reach the base hospitals; but even so we found we were still losing many as a consequence of the delay that would often arise in transporting them over some badly exposed bit of road on which it was not deemed safe to risk ambulances or stretcher-bearers. Then we devised a special basket for wounded, to be run on the *teleferica* (as you see here), with the

result that we are now saving practically every man that it is humanly possible to save."

While he was speaking the *teleferica*, which ended beside the tent of the operating theatre, began to click, and presently an oblong box, almost identical in size and shape with a coffin, appeared against the sky-line of the ridge and began gently gliding toward us along the sagging cable. "In that box," continued the surgeon, "there will be a man whose life depends upon whether or not his wound can be operated upon within an hour or so of the time he received it. He was probably started on his way to us within ten minutes of the time he arrived at the advanced dressing station, and if he was not left lying out too long the chances are we will pull him through. All up the other slope of the ridge he came across ground that is being heavily shelled (as you can see from the smoke and dust that are rising), but that basket is so small a mark that the Austrians might fire all day at it without hitting it. One of them occasionally runs into the 'pattern' of a shrapnel burst (with disastrous results, of course), but the only danger worth bothering about is of having the *teleferica* laid up from a shell on the engine-house or one of the supporting towers. Although the man is probably unconscious he is coming alone, you

see. No other life, and not even an ambulance, is risked in bringing him here. Except for the *teleferica*, he could not have been sent over until after dark, and the delay would have been fatal. We estimate that from one to three per cent. of the men wounded on a battlefield which, like this one, lies so exposed that they cannot be sent back at once by stretchers or ambulance, owe their lives directly to the *teleferica*."

When the cover of the basket was lifted off in the station, the body of a man swathed in a blanket was revealed. He was unable to speak, but a note pinned to the blanket stated that he had been struck in the stomach with a shell fragment just outside the engine-house, and that nothing had been done save to wrap enough gauze around his middle to hold the riven abdomen together and bundle him into the waiting *teleferica* basket. "He must have been wounded not over fifteen minutes ago, and within less than a mile in an air-line from here," commented the chief surgeon. "We might have heard the detonation of the shell that did it. Five minutes one way or the other in operating may mean the difference between life and death in a case of this kind, and the chances are that the *teleferica* has given us the necessary margin."

Before I left the hospital, an hour later, the operation was over, and the man was resting comfortably, with every hope of recovery.

On several occasions, going up by a *teleferica*, I have passed a little Red Cross basket going down with a *ferito*, or wounded man (indeed, the occupant of one of these to whom I endeavoured to shout a few words of good cheer in Italian reported below that he had been accosted by an unmistakable *Tedesco*); but by far the queerest passenger it was my lot to "balance" against was one I encountered during an attempt I made to get up the Pasubio on a stormy day last January. It was snowing at the rate of four or five inches an hour, and the air was thick with the driving flakes, when, as a consequence (as I learned later) of a drift being piled right up against the cable where the latter crossed a jutting ledge, the steady "tug-tug" of the pulling wire ceased and my basket came to a quivering standstill. I knew that I had been approaching the halfway point, but the first evidence I had that the "down basket" had stopped near by was a sudden pulsing blast which cut athwart the besom of the storm and assailed my ears like the crack o' doom. Except that it was ten times louder than any human being could make, it was just such a wail of

agony as would be wrung from the throat of a man who was being stretched on the rack.

Again the throbbing blast came hurtling through the storm, and this time I noticed that, starting with a raucous bass note, it kept on rising in a sirenic crescendo until it was suddenly broken short, as though the air which drove it was cut off rather than exhausted. Turning down the high collar of my storm coat, I squirmed around and peered back over my shoulder in the direction of the "Thing of Terror," but only an amorphous grey shape in the line of the opposite cable indicated the position of the other basket. It didn't seem possible that a two-feet-wide-by-six-feet-long wire basket could possibly hold anything large enough to make a sound like that, and yet the fact that the cable at this point was five hundred feet or more in the air made it certain that the sound could come from nowhere else.

A brisk shiver was running up and down my spine as I slithered down again in the bottom of the basket, but I told myself that it was from the cold and set my wits to work to find a "rational" explanation of the weird phenomenon. A great bird—perhaps an eagle—roosting on the cable? Impossible. Nothing on wings since the time of the "pterodactyl,"

or whatever it was called, could have the lung-power for a wail like that. A fog-horn? Not a hundred miles from the sea. A—ah, I had it now! I told myself—gas-alarm signal out of order; Alpino taking it down to have that broken-off note put right—playing it for his own amusement. "What a fool I had been not to think of it before!" I said to myself as I settled back with a sigh of relief and an easy heart to wait for the "train to start."

When, after a half-hour wait, punctuated at pretty regular intervals by the wail of the "gas alert," the gentle "tug-tug" began again, and the basket started on its way, I pulled myself up on my elbow to give the indefatigable serenader a hail in passing. Presently the "down" basket, filled with some sprawling shape, took form in the hard-driven snow, but it was not until it was almost upon me that I saw that the nose of a donkey, stretched a foot over the side, threatened to foul the side of my swaying car in passing. The vigorous punch of my mittened fist with which I fended it clear set another of those air-shivering blasts going, and I had just time to see, before the curtain of the snow dimmed down and swallowed up the fantastic sight, that the sudden cut-off I noticed at the end was caused by the swelling

windpipe being brought into sharp contact with the side of the basket as the beast's neck was stretched out to establish the proper air columns to form the sirenic higher notes.

The donkey, they told me in the engine-house at the top, had colic from eating fresh snow on top of the contents of a box of dried figs he had broached, and they had tied his legs and sent him down on his way to the "Blue Cross" hospital to be put right. He was a plains donkey, and didn't have good "Alpine sense," else they would have driven him down by the path on his own legs. If they had known that a guest was coming up, however, they said, they wouldn't have sent down an ass in the *teleferica*. It wasn't quite safe for either passenger on account of the way the animal sprawled. The last donkey they had sent down got his hind legs tangled in a load of firewood that was coming up, and they had lost a good deal of the precious fuel at a time when they were at the bottom of their pile, with a storm coming on. The "up" car always got the worst of a collision, but if they were only warned that anyone of importance was coming, they took great care that there shouldn't be any collision. No one ever got much hurt on a *teleferica*, anyhow.

It seems to be a plain fact that no man has yet lost his life on the Italian front as a consequence of riding in a *teleferica*. Many have been killed in constructing them, and even more in patrolling the lines and keeping them in repair. Men have fallen or have jumped out of the baskets, often from considerable heights, and men have been brought in stiff with cold after two or three hours of exposure to a blizzard in a stalled car. Stations and engines have been carried away and buried, with all serving them, a hundred feet beneath an avalanche; but in these, as well as in all other mishaps connected with *telefericas*, inquiries which I pursued during the whole time I spent on the Italian front failed to reveal a single instance in which an actual passenger had lost his life. Hairbreadth escapes and rescues I heard of by the score. The story of one of the most remarkable of the latter was related by no less a personage than the brave and distinguished Colonel —now General—" Peppino " Garibaldi, grandson of the Liberator, and hero of the famous capture of the peak of the Coli di Lano.

While I was staying with Colonel Garibaldi in the Dolomites last winter the station of a *teleferica* which I had been expecting to use on the morrow in going up to the lines on the

glacier of the Marmolada was carried away by an avalanche, which also killed one of the engineers. It was the receipt of the news of this disaster which led my host to remark that one of the most spectacularly brave feats he had ever heard of had been performed by an Alpino the previous winter in connection with putting right a stalled car on this very span of cableway which had just been destroyed.

"At this stage of the game," said Colonel Garibaldi, who is fluent in American idiom as a consequence of his many revolutionary campaigns in both North and South America, "they were not grooving the wheels of the *teleferica* basket deeply enough, with the result that they were occasionally blown off the cables by strong winds. So far as we could, the carrying of passengers was suspended during blizzards, but of course every now and then an occasion would arise when the chance had to be taken. That was how it happened that a staff officer from the Comando Supremo, who had never been on a *teleferica* before, was in a basket which was blown from the cable of the first Marmolada span at the height of a heavy storm last March. The basket was within a couple of hundred metres of the end of its journey when the derailment of its two forward wheels occurred—in

fact, it was a good deal nearer 'land' in that direction than downwards, where there was a clear drop of three or four hundred metres on to frozen snow.

"If the air is quiet, a basket (going up, of course; the 'down' one runs by gravity) with only one pair of wheels off can usually be 'nursed' along the cable by gentle tugs from the engine, and that was what the engineers tried to do in this instance. The side pressure of the wind was too strong, however, and within a metre or two the cable wedged in beside the wheels and jammed hard. If there had not been a man in the basket, they would simply have sped up the engine and gone on pulling until either the basket came up or something broke. If the former, all was well; if the latter, they picked up the pieces as soon as the weather permitted, rushed their repairs, and started up again. With a passenger—and especially a staff officer—to reckon with, it was a different proposition.

"Luckily the chap kept his nerve, and between snow flurries they could see him working hard trying to get the wheels on again. An expert *teleferica* lineman can, with luck, occasionally put a pair of wheels back on the track alone; but unless one understands exactly how to take

his weight off the basket by hanging over the cable the job is as hopeless as trying to lift yourself by your boot-straps. This chap was anything but an expert, and, after fumbling with numbing fingers for ten or fifteen minutes, he waved his hand with a gesture of despair and sank back into the bottom of the heeled-over basket.

"The Alpino has lived among blizzards all his life, and is able to figure pretty closely how much resistance is left in a man exposed to wind and cold under any given conditions. They knew that a man tucked in comfortably in a basket on an even keel waiting for engine repairs is good for several times as long as one hanging on for dear life to the sides of an apparently hopelessly stalled and half-upset basket. Most of the men watching from the station gave the poor chap from fifteen to twenty minutes; it was only the most optimistic who said half an hour. In any case, there was only one thing to do—to send a man down to the disabled basket; and a lineman who had shortly before performed a similar feat successfully when a load of badly needed shells was stalled on the cable volunteered to do it.

"Suspending the intrepid fellow from the cable in a hastily rigged harness hung from a spare pair of wheels, they tied a long line round

his waist and let him coast down by gravity to the basket. The line, paid out slowly, kept him from gaining too much momentum. The journey—an easy feat for a man with a good head—was made without mishap. The officer's mind was still clear and his nerve unbroken, but, numb with cold and on the verge of physical collapse, he was unable to lift a finger to save himself. The most he could do was to maintain his hold, and even that he could not be expected to do for long.

"For some time the Alpino, still suspended in his harness, put forth all his strength in an endeavour to lift the basket sufficiently to allow the displaced wheels to slip back on to the cable, but there was no way to bring enough force to bear to be of any use, and, after nearly spilling out the man he was trying to save, he gave it up. Next he tried to lighten the basket of the weight of the officer by passing a couple of hitches of the bight of the line around him and tricing him up to the cable immediately overhead. He succeeded in his immediate end, but in doing so defeated his ultimate one. The body of the officer swung clear of the bottom of the basket, but hung in such a way that the Alpino could not himself get in the proper position to lift from.

"By now it was evident to the would-be rescuer that nothing could be accomplished unless the helpless officer were got clear of the car entirely, and this could be effected only by changing places with him. How the resolute fellow did it Heaven and the special providence which always sees the Alpino through only know. They paid him out a couple of metres more of line when they felt him tugging for it, and then they had a snow-blurred vision of him scrambling about the tilted car for three or four busy minutes. Finally they got the short, sharp, double tug which was the signal he had arranged to give in the event that he failed in his attempt and wanted to be drawn back.

"Not a little cast down over this development, they began hauling in from the station, only to feel the more apprehension when they saw it was a limp and apparently lifeless body that was coming up to them out of the storm. A reassuring yodel rolled up from the misty depths at this juncture, however, and the sharpest-eyed of them announced that he could see his comrade 'jack-knifed' over the cable jerking the basket straight. Even before the body of the swooned officer, with its wind-blown arms and legs flopping like those of a scarecrow, was swung on to the landing and released from its harness,

the ringing bang of a steel spanner on the cable gave the familiar signal of 'Haul away!'

"He came up (so his captain told me later)," concluded Colonel Garibaldi, "sitting on the rim of the basket with his eagle's feather rasping right along the sagging cable all the way, his hobnailed boots drumming a tattoo on the steel bottom, and singing the Alpini marching song in a voice that set the echoes ringing above the howling of the storm."

The expedlent of shooting a *teleferica* cable across an otherwise unbridgeable space was not tried for the first time on the occasion referred to in the opening paragraph of this chapter—when it was resorted to in running a line across a flood-swollen river. The same plan had been successfully followed a year previously in carrying succour to a band of Alpini who, through the destruction of their *teleferica* by an avalanche, were left "marooned" on the side of a glacier with only a few days' supply of food and munitions. The one path leading up to their eyrie had also been scoured away by the slide, so that a month or more of labour would have been required to open communications in this way. For the same reason even a longer period would have had to elapse before the *teleferica* could be restored; that is, if the cable were to

be carried up as when it was first built. The mountaineering genius of the Alpini would undoubtedly have been equal to the problem of finding their way back to safety by letting each other down by ropes, but this would have involved the abandonment of a position which it was vitally important to hold.

The expedient of shooting the cable up from a gun was the only one of the many alternatives considered which promised any chance of success. The first attempt nearly proved a "boomerang," for the weight of the cable deflected the chargeless six-inch shell to which it was attached nearly sixty degrees and sent it crashing through a mule stable, fortunately empty at the moment. A shell attached to a lighter cable went almost equally wide of its mark; in fact, all attempts with high-velocity guns were dismal failures, and it was not until one of the new long-range trench-mortars was brought up that the experiment took an encouraging turn, though success was not won until the cable-line was displaced by a light manila rope. This was fired to its goal—an eminence half a mile distant and a thousand feet high—at the first shot, and afterwards served to drag up a light cable which, in turn, dragged up the heavy one. The single-span *teleferica* installed at this time—quite free from

the menace which had overwhelmed its lower predecessor—was still in use when I visited this sector nine months later.

Perhaps the most spectacular exploit ever carried out from a *teleferica* was that by which a troublesome nest of Austrian machine-gunners were cleared off one of the pinnacles of the great M—— *massif* in the fall of 1916. At that time the lofty ridge was divided between the Italians and Austrians. The latter had access to one splintered pinnacle which, although there was no room to establish a permanent position on, offered a splendid vantage from which to observe all Italian movements in the valley beneath. The situation was irritating enough for the Italians even when the activities of the enemy were confined only to observation, but when he took to bringing up a machine-gun and peppering—almost from its rear—the headquarters of an Alpini battalion which held an important pass three thousand feet below, it became well-nigh intolerable. What happened was related to me some months later, when I asked the major of this battalion how it chanced that the roof of the officers' mess, in which we were dining, was armoured with sheets of steel.

"Against machine-gun bullets," was the reply: "there was a time of accursed memory

in which the enemy used to bring a gun out on a little splinter of rock, not fifteen hundred metres from here in an air line, and spray the whole of our little terrace with 'dum-dums.'"

"It must have been a bit trying," I observed. "How did you manage to stick it?"

"By keeping out of sight as much as possible," he replied; "that is, until the day we went after him from the *teleferica*. After that he left us alone until we had time to get a gun rigged up to make him keep his distance."

"Went after him from the *teleferica!*" I repeated, in surprise. "What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I said," he answered, with a smile. "We were working day and night to excavate a gun-cavern, the fire from which would make that troublesome position untenable for the Austrian machine-gunners. In the meantime we had to stick it out as best we could, for the least weakening of our force at this point would have been the signal for an Austrian attack which might well have left them in possession of the pass. By doing most of our moving about at night we were getting on fairly well until, opening up at an

unexpectedly early hour one morning, they killed a good many more of us than I like to think of.

"It was at this juncture that Captain X—— over there, who had had a bullet through his hat, came to me with a drawing in his hand, and said that he had just figured out that, between the third and fourth towers of the *teleferica*, there was a point from which the Austrian machine-gun position could be enfiladed with deadly effect.

"If our position had not been really serious I should probably never have listened to such a mad proposal. As it was, I entered into it heart and soul. We hung the platform of the machine-gun on to the cable at an angle which would make it easy to elevate and range on the Austrian position above. Then—as a happy afterthought—we bent a sheet of bullet-proof steel for a shield on the exposed side, erected a low platform on which the gun would rest securely, and—the first and last armoured *teleferica* was complete. Between X—— and his helper, the armour and the gun, the weight was about double that which the *teleferica* was supposed to carry, but I knew there was a wide margin of safety allowed for, and had no misgivings on that score. With X—— and his

assistant crouched low on either side of the gun, and with a black tarpaulin thrown loosely over the whole, she looked as much like an ordinary load of junk going down for repairs as anyone could wish.

"The Austrians, who had been busy for an hour peppering the zigzags of the path up to the trenches at the lip of the pass, took no notice of the innocent-looking load slipping down the *teleferica*. The relieved men from above, dodging in quick rushes past the exposed stretches of the zigzags, offered them far more exciting practice than a load of old gear. The latter disappeared from our sight at the second tower, reappeared at the third, and was in full view when X—— 'unmasked' and opened up. We could even follow the line of brown dust-spurts on the face of the cliff as the bullets ranged upward to their mark. The fire of the two Austrian machine-guns ceased instantly, and never resumed. Probably the gunners were killed before ever they had a chance to turn round their guns and reply to the sudden attack from the air.

"After spraying the pinnacle for five minutes X—— signalled to be drawn up. He arrived at the station to report his job finished. Against possible further use for her, we improved our

'aerial dreadnought' considerably in the next day or two, but there was never occasion to send her into action again. When the Austrians *did* venture up our big gun was in place, and we scoured them off the top with high explosive."

THE GARIBALDI FIGHT AGAIN FOR FREEDOM

Once or twice in every winter a thick, sticky, hot wind from somewhere on the other side of the Mediterranean breathes upon the snow and ice-locked Alpine valleys the breath of a false springtime. The Swiss guides, if I remember correctly, call it by a name which is pronounced nearly as we do the word "fun"; but the incidence of such a wind means to them anything but what that signifies in English. To them—to all in the Alps, indeed—a spell of *fun* weather means thaw, and thaw means avalanches; avalanches, too, at a time of the year when there is so much snow that the slides are under constant temptation to abandon their beaten tracks and gouge out new and unexpected channels for themselves. It is only the first-time visitor to the Alps who bridles under the Judas kiss of the wind called *fun*.

It was on an early January day of one of these treacherous hot winds that I was motored up from the plain of Venezia to a certain sector

of the Italian Alpine front, a sector almost as important strategically as it is beautiful scenically. What twelve hours previously had been a flint-hard ice-paved road had dissolved to a river of soft slush, and one could sense rather than see the ominous premonitory twitchings in the lowering snow-banks as the lapping of the hot moist air relaxed the brake of the frost which had held them on the precipitous mountain sides. Every stretch where the road curved to the embrace of cliff or shelving valley wall was a possible ambush, and we slipped by them with muffled engine and hushed voices.

Toward the middle of the short winter afternoon the gorge we had been following opened out into a narrow valley, and straight over across the little lake which the road skirted, reflected in the shimmering sheet of steaming water that the thaw was throwing out across the ice, was a vivid white triangle of towering mountain. A true granite Alp among the splintered Dolomites—a fortress among cathedrals—it was the outstanding, the dominating feature in a panorama which I knew from my map was made up of the mountain chain along which wriggled the interlocked lines of the Austro-Italian battle-front.

"Plainly a peak with a personality," I

said to the officer at my side. "What is it called?"

"It's the Col di Lana," was the reply; "the mountain that Colonel "Peppino" Garibaldi took partially in a first attempt, and afterwards Gelasio Caetani, the Italo-American mining engineer, blew up and captured completely. It is one of the most important positions on our whole front, for whichever side holds it not only effectually blocks the enemy's advance, but has also an invaluable sally-port from which to launch his own. We simply *had* to have it, and it was taken in what was probably the only way humanly possible. It's Colonel Garibaldi's headquarters, by the way, where we put up to-night and to-morrow; perhaps you can get him to tell you the story."

Where his study window looks out on the yellow Tiber winding through the Rome for which his father had fought so long and so bravely, I had listened one afternoon, not long previously, to that fiery old warrior, General Ricciotti Garibaldi, while he spoke of the war and of Italy's part in it. "All of my boys are fighting," he had said, "and my daughters and my wife are nursing. Two of the boys are gone —killed in France—but the other five are with

the Italian army. They are all good fighters, I think ; but one of them—Peppino, the eldest—is also an able soldier. Or at least he ought to be, for he has been trained in the 'Garibaldi' school. There hasn't been a war (save only that between Russia and Japan) or revolution in any part of the world in the last twenty years that he hasn't drawn a sword, carried a rifle, or swung a machete. You must make a point of seeing him if you are visiting his part of the front, for he is a good little fellow, is our Peppino."

"And you'll fare well if you put up with Peppino, too," his little English mother had added : "He is sure to have a good cook ; and then the dear boy was always so fond of sweets that I can't imagine his doing without them. Besides, Sante is with him, and Sante was running a co-operative creamery when the war broke out. You may be sure that he has foraged his share of the good things too."

We found the grandson and namesake of the great Giuseppe Garibaldi quartered in a little string of an Alpine village which occupied the last bit of ground open enough to enjoy even comparative immunity from the snow sliding from either flank of the deep valley which the road

followed up to the pass. The "good little fellow" who sprang up from his map and report-littered desk to bid us welcome turned out to be six feet of vigorous manhood, with a powerful pair of shoulders, a face red-bronzed from the sun-glint on the snow, and a grip which fused my fingers in the galvanic pressure of its friendly clasp. The high, narrow forehead, the firm line of the mouth, the steady serious eyes—all were distinctly Garibaldian, recalling to me the words of his mother: "Ricciotti is my handsomest boy, but Peppino is the one most like the old General, his grandfather."

His greeting was warm and hearty, and only in the grave eyes was there hint of the terrible responsibility accumulating through the fact that a hot, moist wind was playing upon the heaviest fall of snow the Alps had known for many winters.

"I have sketched you out a tentative programme for the next twenty-four hours," he said, speaking English with an accent which plainly revealed that it had come to its fluency under American—and probably Western American—skies "which is as far (and a good deal farther, in fact) ahead than there is any use in planning while this accursed weather lasts. There are still a couple of hours of daylight, so

we will begin by taking sledges to the upper valley and making a survey of our lines from below. To-morrow—God willing!" (he said it with the same quick fervency with which the pious Mohammedan interpolates "Imshallah" into any outline of his future plans) "you and Captain X—— will go to the summit and glacier of the Marmolada, perhaps the most spectacular position on all our front. That will depend upon whether or not we can keep the *teleféricas* going."

As the sledge threaded its way between deep-cut snow-banks up the narrowing gorge, Colonel Garibaldi spoke briefly of the difficulties of Alpine transport in midwinter.

"On the ordinary battle front, like those of France and Russia," he said, "it requires rather less than one man on the line of communications to maintain one man in the first-line trenches. For the whole Italian front the average is something over two men on the communications to one in the first line; but at points in the Alps (as on this sector of mine), it may run up to six, or even eight or ten in bad weather. It isn't just keeping the roads clear from falling and drifting snow, it's the *valangas*, the slides. And with the slides the worst trouble isn't just the men you may lose under them (though that's terrible enough, Heaven knows), but rather the

men who are holding the lines up beyond the slides that have to be fed and munitioned whatever happens. By an unkind trick of fate (just as bad for the enemy as for ourselves, however), the snows of this year have been among the heaviest ever known. This means that the slides are also bad beyond all precedent, and especially that they are coming in unexpected places, places where they have never been known before. Slides in new places mean—what you saw where that swath was cut through the lower end of the little village down the valley, and problems like this!"

We had just come out of a narrowed section of the gorge where, to get through at all the road had to run on a sort of trestle built above the now frozen river, and where the ice-sheathed walls above us interlocked like the jaws of a wolf-trap. Ahead of us the road was blocked by a towering barrier of crumpled snow, piled a hundred feet or more high from wall to wall. Rocks and snapped-off and up-ended pine trees peppered through the amorphous mass furnished unmistakable evidence that the avalanche which formed it had come down out of a "track."

"We couldn't go over it, and we couldn't have shovelled it away in ten years," said my companion; "so we simply had to follow the only

alternative left and go through it. Here we go into the tunnel now. My great worry is as to whether the new slide that the next day or two—or the next hour or two, for that matter —may bring down upon this will crush in my little tunnel or only pile up harmlessly above. Hard-packed as it is, the snow" (I felt him lurch away from me in the darkness, and heard the soft swish of something brushing against the side of the tunnel) "is slushy even in under here. I'm rather afraid that it won't stand much more weight, even if it doesn't fall in of its own. But—ah" (we were out of the tunnel now, and a fluted yellow cliff of staggering sheerness loomed through the notch ahead), "there's the Marmolada! Doesn't look like an easy place to dislodge the enemy from, does it? Well, my men—my brother, Major Ricciotti Garibaldi, leading them—took the most of the 13,000-foot *massif* from the Austrians with the loss of so few men that I am still being accused of having thrown my dead in the *crevasses* of the glacier and filling their places with smuggled recruits!"

An Alpino passed singing, and the Colonel took up the air as he returned the salute.

"O Marmolada, tu es bella, tu es grana
ina in peo e forta in guerra."

"It's a song the men have made," he said. "The Marmolada was famous even in peace time, but up to a year or two before the war it had never been climbed from this side. The Captain of Alpini in the post at that pass on the left was the first Italian to make the ascent. It took him two days, and cost him several hundred *lira* for guides. Well, it was from this very side that we took it (I can't tell you exactly how, as we want to use the same method again), and now we are sending fuel and food and munitions up there every day. To-morrow, if the *telefericas* are still running, you will go up there to that snow-cap on the top in less than an hour."

On the way back to the village in the gathering dusk I had an illuminative example of the famous Garibaldi *sang froid*. The conversation had turned—as it seemed to persist in doing during all of my visit—to common friends and haunts in South America, and I mentioned a meeting with Castro in Venezuela some years previously. "Just what month was that?" Colonel Garibaldi queried. "March," I replied. "Then at that very moment," said he, "I was chained to a ring in the wall of the jail at Ciudad Bolivar. A little later," he continued, "I and a fellow-*revolutionista* chained up with me broke out and started to swim the Orinoco to——"

At that moment the sledge chanced to be worrying by a long pack train on the trestle in the bottom of the overhung gorge I have referred to, and just as my companion reached this point in his story a big icicle, thawed loose somewhere above, came crashing down on the back of one of the mules. The pack-load of provisions was riven as by a knife, and the mule, recoiling from the sudden shock, shied back into the animal immediately behind him. This one, in turn, backed into the animal next in line, so that the impulse went back through the train by what I once heard an old Chilkat packer call "mu-legraphy." The consequence was that the hundred yards of gorge (in passing through which one was cautioned even to lower one's voice for fear of starting vibration that might break loose one of the thousand or so Damoclean swords suspended above) was thrown into an uproar that set the echoes ringing. The temperamental Alpini swore at the mules and at each other from the depths of their leather lungs while the mules simply did the mulish thing by standing on their forelegs and lashing out with their hind ones at whatever fell within their reach.

But, unruffled alike by the kinetic energy released below and the potential energy which menaced from above, the imperturbable scion

of the Garibaldi simply leaned closer to my ear and went on with his story.

"Poor Y—— never reached the bank. Shark got him, I think. I headed off into the jungle ——" That was about all the story I remember, except the finish, which had to do with racing a couple of Castro's spies for a British steamer lying alongside the quay at La Guayra. This latter part, however, was related after we had come out from under the icicles and the heels of the mules to the open road beneath the awakening stars.

There were several interruptions during dinner that evening. Once a wayfaring Alpino, whose lantern had gone out, and who had turned in to the nearest house to relight it, appeared at the door. That he stumbled upon his Colonel's mess did not appear to disturb him a whit more than it did the Colonel who gave the smiling chap a box of matches and sent him on his way with a cheery "*a rivederci.*" A little later the door was opened in response to a timid knock to reveal a little old lady who wanted to borrow a tin of condensed milk and five eggs. Her son was coming home on leave on the morrow, she said, and she was going to make a *pannello* for his dinner. The little village shop was out of

eggs and milk for the moment, and as the *Colonello's* cook had refused to lend them to her, she had come straight to the *Colonello* himself. She had heard he was very kind.

"See that she has all she wants; fill up her basket," was the order sent out to the cook. And then, as the grateful little old dame backed, bowing, out of the door: "Feed him up well, *madre;* a man has to have something under his belt to fight in these mountains, doesn't he?"

"Brother Sante usually looks after callers of this kind for me," said my host with a laugh; "but Sante is away for a day or two, and I have no buffer. You will observe, by the way, that I am not quite at one with my distinguished grandfather in the matter of rations. What was it he said to the men who had assembled to follow him in his flight after the unsuccessful fight for the Roman Republic? 'I offer neither pay, quarters nor provisions; I offer hunger, thirst forced marches, battle, and death.' Well, I too have plenty of fighting to offer my men, but no more of the other 'inducements' than I can possibly help. And when they have to die I like to feel that it's on a full stomach.

"Perhaps you heard," he went on, "what a stir it made up here when I first asked for marmalade for my men. They started out by

laughing at me. 'Of course,' they said, 'we know that your mother is English; but that is no reason why, much as *you* may crave it, your *men* should need marmalade!' Then they said that *marmellata* would cost too much, and finally tried to prove that it would be bad for the men's health. But I had seen what troops had done in South Africa on a generous marmalade allowance; also what they were doing in France. So I stuck to it, and—well, we took the Marmolada on *marmellata*, and a good many Austrians besides."

We were still laughing over the little joke when the door opened and the telephone operator from the room across the hall entered to report in a low voice some news that had just reached him. The Colonel's face changed from gay to grave in an instant; but it was with voice and manner of quiet restraint that he asked a couple of quick questions and then gave a brief order, evidently to be transmitted back whence the news had come.

"It must have been either A—— or B——" he said musingly, turning again to the big slice of caramel cake he had just cut for himself when the interruption occurred. "Oh I beg pardon; but I've just had word that the middle *teleferica* serving the Marmolada has been carried away

by an avalanche, and that one of the engineers is killed. I was just speculating as to which one it was. They were both good men—men I can ill afford to lose. This puts an end, by the way, to the trip we had planned for you for to-morrow. You will have to go to the position at the —— instead; providing, of course, *that teleferica* doesn't meet a like fate."

South American revolution (in vivid reminiscence) had raised its hydra-head many times before I saw my way clear to turn the conversation into the channel where I was so interested to direct its flow.

"Won't you tell me, Colonel," I said finally, "something of how the young Garibaldi have carried on the tradition of the old Garibaldi in this war? Tell me how it came about that you all foregathered in France in the early months of the war, what you did there, and what you have done since; and, especially, tell me how you took the Col di Lana."

"That's (as you Americans say) rather a tall order," was the laughing reply; "but I'll gladly do what I can to fill it."

He drained his glass of cognac, waited till the occult rite of lighting his "Virginia" over its little spirit-lamp was complete and then began his story (as I had hoped he would) at the

beginning. The narration which follows was punctuated by the steady drip of the eaves and the not infrequent rumble of a distant avalanche as the hot south wind called *fun* breathed its relaxing breath on a half winter's accumulation of hanging snow.

"My father—and even my grandfather—had foreseen that Europe must ultimately fight its way to freedom through a great war; that the two irreconcilable forces (fairly represented by what France, England, Italy, and the United States stood for, on the one hand, and what Prussia and its satellites stood for on the other) made no other alternative possible. The same feelings which led my father and grandfather to fight for France in 1870 led me and my brothers to offer ourselves to fight for France and her Allies in 1914.

"As the eldest of seven sons and the namesake of my grandfather, my father felt that it was up to me to carry on the Garibaldi tradition, and when I was scarcely out of my teens he sent me out to train in the only school that the old General ever recognised—that of practical experience. 'Some day you will be needed in Europe,' he said. 'Until then, see that you make yourself ready by taking part in every war that you

can find. Learn how men follow, and then learn how men lead. If there is any choice between two causes, fight for the one you think your grandfather would have fought for; but don't miss a fight because you can't make up your mind on that score. The experience is the thing, and the only way you can get it is in real battles, not sham ones.'

"Well, I did the best I could, considering the day and age we live in, to follow out my father's idea. With what success (so far as a comprehensive experience was concerned) you may judge from the fact that, up to the outbreak of the present war, I had—counting skirmishes—fought on 132 battlefields. That I had not been wounded was not, I trust, entirely due to not having been exposed to fire.

"The preparation of my brothers had been rather less drastic—less 'Garibaldian'—than my own. In their cases, it was my father's idea that it would be sufficient if they simply knew the world and how to get on with men; and to this end he encouraged them, as fast as they became old enough, to seek work abroad, preferably something of an outdoor character, such as that in connection with engineering projects. None of us was overburdened with book-learning or technical training, myself least of all. Indeed,

I have often wished I had a bit more of both.

" So it was that it happened that the outbreak of the war found all but the two youngest of us scattered to the ends of the earth. I was in New York (not long before I had gone through the first Mexican revolution as Chief of Staff to General Madero), and with me was my second brother, Ricciotti, who had joined me there for a trip to South America. Menotti was in China, on the engineering staff of the Canton-Kowloon Railway, and Sante, also an engineer, was working on the Assuan Dam in Upper Egypt. Bruno was in a sugar 'central' in Cuba, and Costante and Ezia, the two youngest of us, were at their studies in Italy. My sister, Italia, was organising Red Cross work in Rio de Janeiro.

" As the war clouds began to gather, my father sent a letter to each of the five of us abroad, saying that when we received a cable from him we were to start at once for whatever place was mentioned in it. I forget what the cables received by Ricciotti and myself were about; but the rendezvous was Paris, and we were away by the next boat. We found Ezia and Costante already awaiting us in Paris, and Bruno and Sante arrived a few days later. Menotti could not arrange to get away from China until his own

country entered the war, some months subsequently.

"Word had already gone out that an Italian Legion was to be formed to fight for the Allies, but in what theatre had not yet been decided upon. All my own training had been for guerilla warfare, and, figuring that this could be turned to the best use in the Balkans, I was in hopes that my legion could be landed in Albania, to co-operate with the Servians and Montenegrans against Austria. This was not to be, however; indeed, Ezia, who was sent to drive a *camion* at Salonika after being wounded on this front a few months ago, has so far been the only Garibaldi to reach the Balkans. I am sorry, in a way, for I still think that that would have been my sphere of greatest usefulness.

"Recruits flocked to us from all over the world, among them being many men who had fought with me in South and Central America. We were quite the typical band of soldiers of fortune, and except for the fact that we were all Italians, there wasn't a great deal to differentiate us from the Foreign Legion into which we were incorporated. Side by side with the several scions of Italian nobility who had joined us marched men who had ridden as *gauchos* on the pampas of Argentina or hammered drills in

the mines of Colorado and the Transvaal. Nor was I by any means the only one who had peered hungrily outward through barred gratings and was familiar with the clank and tug of the ankle chain. But whatever we were, and whoever we were, we had come to fight, and we did fight. Yes, all in all, I think we lived up to the traditions of the *Légion Étrangère* quite as well on the score of fighting as we did on that of pedigree. It isn't where you come *from* that counts on the battle line, but only where you *go to;* and if there was a man in the Italian Legion who wasn't ready to fight until he dropped, I can only say that he did not come under my notice.

"Considering the fact that we began with practically raw material (though, of course, many of the men had seen previous service), and that there were no *cadres* to build upon, I think our work with the *Legion Italienne* was about a record for quick training. It was October before we were well started, and by the end of December we were not only on the first line, but had already gone through some of the bloodiest fighting the war has seen. My grandfather used to say that proper military training was nine-tenths a matter of applied common sense and one-tenth a matter of drill. Well, I employed what common sense and experience I had, and made up

the rest with drill. Inside of two months we had 4,000 men at the front, where the French Higher Command was so well impressed with their quality that it was but a week or two before they were deemed worthy of the place of honour in an attack upon the Prussian Guard, which had been pressing steadily forward in the hope of cutting the communications between Chalons and Verdun. No regiment ever had a warmer baptism of fire. We drove back the Guard two and a half kilometres, but lost a thousand men in the effort.

"I don't recall anything that was actually said between us on the subject, but it seemed to be generally understood among us brothers that the shedding of some Garibaldi blood—or, better still, the sacrifice of a Garibaldi life—would be calculated to throw a great, perhaps a decisive, weight into the wavering balance in Italy, where a growing sympathy for the cause of the Allies only needed a touch to quicken it to action. Indeed I am under the impression that my father said something to that effect to the two younger boys before he sent them on to France. At any rate, all three of the youngsters behaved exactly as though their only object in life was to get in the way of German bullets. Well—Bruno got *his* in the last week in Decem-

ber, ten or twelve days ahead of Costante, who fell on January 5. Ezia—the youngest of the three fire-eaters—though, through no fault of his own, had to wait and take his bullet from the Austrians on our own front. (It occurred not far from here, by the way.)

"The attack in which Bruno fell was one of the finest things I have ever seen. General Gouraud sent for me in person to explain why a certain system of trenches, which we were ordered to attack, *must* be taken and held, no matter what the price. We mustered for mass at midnight—it was Christmas, or the day after, I believe—and the memory of that icicle-framed altar in the ruined roofless church, with the flickering candles throwing just light enough to silhouette the tall form of Gouraud, who stood in front of me will never fade from my mind.

"We went over the parapet before daybreak, and it was in the first light of the cold winter dawn that I saw Bruno—plainly hit—straighten up from his running crouch and topple into the first of the German trenches, across which the leading wave of our attack was sweeping. He was up before I could reach him, however (I don't think he ever looked to see where he was hit), and I saw him clamber up the other side, and, running without a hitch or stagger, lead

his men in pursuit of the fleeing enemy. I never saw him again alive.

"They found his body, with six bullet-wounds upon it lying where the gust from a machine-gun had caught him as he tried to climb out and lead his men on beyond the last of the trenches we had been ordered to take and hold. He had charged into the trench, thrown out the enemy, and made—for whatever it was worth—the first sacrifice of his own generation of Garibaldi. We sent his body to my father and mother in Rome, where, as you will doubtless remember, his funeral was made the occasion of the most remarkable patriotic demonstration Italy has known in recent years. From that moment the participation of our country in the war became only a matter of time. Costante's death a few days later only gave added impulse to the wave of popular feeling which was soon to align Italy where she belonged, in the forefront of the fight for the freedom of Europe.

"Further fighting that fell to the lot of the Legion in the course of January reduced its numbers to such an extent that it had to be withdrawn to rest and re-form. Before it was in condition to take the field again, our country had taken the great decision, and we were disbanded to go home and fight for Italy. Here—

principally because it was thought best to incorporate the men in the units to which they (by training or residence) really belonged—it was found impracticable to maintain the integrity of the fourteen battalions—about 14,000 men in all—we had formed in France, and, as a consequence, the *Legion Italienne* ceased to exist except as a glorious memory. We five surviving Garibaldi were given commissions in a brigade of Alpini that is a 'lineal descendant' of the famous *cacciatore* formed by my grandfather in 1859, and led by him against the Austrians in the war in which, with the aid of the French, we redeemed Lombardy for Italy.

"In July I was given command of a battalion occupying a position at the foot of the Col di Lana. Perhaps you saw from the lake as you came up the commanding position of this mountain. If so, you will understand its supreme importance to us, whether for defensive or offensive purposes. Looking straight down the Cordevole Valley toward the plains of Italy, it not only furnished the Austrians an incomparable observation post, but also stood as an effectual barrier against any advance of our own toward the Livinallongo Valley and the important Pordoi Pass. We needed it imperatively for the safety of any line we established in this region,

and just as imperatively would we need it when we were ready to push the Austrians back. Since it was just as important for the Austrians to maintain possession of this great natural fortress as it was for us to take it away from them, you will understand how it came about that the struggle for the Col di Lana was perhaps the bitterest that has yet been waged for any one point on the Alpine front.

"Early in July, under cover of our guns to the south and east, the Alpini streamed down from the Cima di Falzarego and Sasso di Stria, which they had occupied shortly before, and secured what was at first but a precarious foothold on the stony lower eastern slope of the Col di Lana. Indeed, it was little more than a toe-hold at first; but the never-resting Alpini soon dug themselves in and became firmly established. It was to the command of this battalion of Alpini that I came on July 12, after being given to understand that my work was to be the taking of the Col di Lana regardless of cost.

"This was the first time that I—or any other Garibaldi, for that matter (my grandfather, with his 'Thousand,' took Sicily from fifty times that number of Bourbon soldiers)—had ever had enough (or even the promise of enough) men to make that 'regardless of cost' formula

much more than a hollow mockery. But it is not in a Garibaldi to sacrifice men for any object whatever if there is any possible way of avoiding it. The period of indiscriminate frontal attacks had passed even before I left France, and ways were already being devised—mostly mining and better artillery protection—to make assaults less costly. Scientific 'man-saving,' in which my country has since made so much progress, was then in its infancy on the Italian front.

"I found many difficulties in the way of putting into practice on the Col di Lana the man-saving theories I had seen in process of development in the Argonne. At that time the Austrians—who had appreciated the great importance of that mountain from the outset—had us heavily out-gunned, while mining in the hard rock was too slow to make it worth while until some single position of crucial value hung in the balance. So—well, I simply did the best I could under the circumstances. The most I could do was to give my men as complete protection as possible while they were not fighting, and this end was accomplished by establishing them in galleries cut out of the solid rock. This was, I believe, the first time the 'gallery-barracks'—now quite the rule at all exposed points—were used on the Italian front.

"There was no other way in the beginning but to drive the enemy off the Col di Lana trench by trench, and this was the task I set myself to toward the end of July. What made the task an almost prohibitive one was the fact that the Austrian guns from Corte and Cherz—which we were in no position to reduce to silence—were able to rake us unmercifully. Every move we made during the next nine months was carried out under their fire, and there is no use in denying that we suffered heavily. I used no more men than I could possibly help using, and the Higher Command was very generous in the matter of reserves, and even in increasing the strength of the force at my disposal as we gradually got more room to work in. By the end of October my original command of a battalion had been increased largely.

"The Austrians made a brave and skilful defence, but the steady pressure we were bringing to bear on them gradually forced them back up the mountain. By the first week in November we were in possession of three sides of the mountain, while the Austrians held the fourth side and—but most important of all—the summit. The latter presented a sheer wall of rock, over 200 metres high to us from any direction we were able to approach it, and on the crest of this cliff

—the only point exposed to our artillery fire—the enemy had a cunningly concealed machine-gun post served by fourteen men. Back and behind, under shelter in a rock gallery, was a reserve of 200 men, who were expected to remain safely under cover during a bombardment, and then sally forth to repel any infantry attack that might follow it. The handful in the machine-gun post, it was calculated, would be sufficient, and more than sufficient, to keep us from scaling the cliff before their reserves came up to support them ; and so they would have been if there had been *only* an infantry attack to reckon with. It failed to allow sufficiently, however, for the weight of the artillery we were bringing up, and the skill of our gunners. The apparent impregnability of the position was really its undoing.

" This cunningly conceived plan of defence I had managed to get a pretty accurate idea of—no matter how—and I laid my own plans accordingly. All the guns I could get hold of I had emplaced in positions most favourable for concentrating on the real key to the summit—the exposed machine-gun post on the crown of the cliff—with the idea, if possible, of destroying men and guns completely, or, failing in that, at least to render it untenable for the reserves who would try to rally to its defence.

" We had the position ranged to an inch, and so, fortunately, lost no time in ' feeling ' for it. This, with the surprise incident to it, was perhaps the principal factor in our success ; for the plan —at least so far as *taking* the summit was concerned—worked out quite as perfectly in action as upon paper. That is the great satisfaction of working with the Alpin, by the way : he is so sure, so dependable, that the ' human fallibility ' element in a plan (always the most uncertain quantity) is practically eliminated.

" It is almost certain that our sudden gust of concentrated gun-fire snuffed out the lives of all the men in the machine-gun post before they had time to send word of our developing infantry attack to the reserves in the gallery below. At any rate, these latter made no attempt whatever to swarm up to the defence of the crest, even after our artillery fire ceased. The consequence was that the 120 Alpini I sent to scale the cliff reached the top with but three casualties, these probably caused by rolling rocks or flying rock fragments. The Austrians in their big ' funk-hole ' were taken completely by surprise, and 130 of them fell prisoners to considerably less than that number of Italians. The rest of 200 escaped or were killed in their flight.

" So far it was so good ; but, unfortunately,

taking the summit and holding it were two entirely different matters. No sooner did the Austrians discover what had happened than they opened on the crest with all their available artillery. We have since ascertained that the fire of 120 guns was concentrated upon a space of 100 by 150 metres which offered the only approach to cover the barren summit afforded. Fifty of my men, finding some shelter in the lee of rocky ledges, remained right out on the summit; the others crept over the edge of the cliff and held on by their fingers and toes. Not a man of them sought safety by flight, though a retirement would have been quite justified, considering what a hell the Austrian guns were making of the place. The enemy counter-attacked at nightfall, but in spite of superior numbers and the almost complete exhaustion of that little band of Alpini heroes, were able to retake only a half of the summit. Here, at a ten-metres-high ridge which roughly bisects the *cima*, the Alpini held the Austrians, and here, in turn, the latter held the reinforcements which I was finally able to send to the Alpini's aid. There, exposed to the fire of the guns of either side (and so, comparatively, safe from both), a line was established from which there seemed little probability that one com-

batant could drive the other, at least without a radical change from the methods so far employed.

"The idea of blowing up positions that cannot be taken otherwise is by no means a new one. Probably it dates back almost as far as the invention of gunpowder itself. Doubtless, if we only knew of them, there have been attempts to mine the Great Wall of China. It was, therefore, only natural that, when the Austrians had us held up before a position it was vitally necessary we should have, we should begin to consider the possibility of mining it as the only alternative. The conception of the plan did not necessarily originate in the mind of any one individual, however many have laid claim to it. It was the inevitable thing if we were not going to abandon striving for our objective.

"But while there was nothing new in the idea of the mine itself, in the carrying out an engineering operation of such magnitude at so great an altitude, and from a position constantly exposed to intense artillery fire, there were presented many problems quite without precedent. It was these problems which gave us pause; but finally, in spite of the prospect of difficulties which we fully realised might at any time become prohibitive, it was decided to

make the attempt to blow up that portion of the summit of the Col di Lana held by the enemy.

"The choice of the engineer for the work was a singularly fortunate one. Gelasio Caetani —he is a son of the Duke of Sermoneta—had operated as a mining engineer in the American West for a number of years previous to the war, and the practical experience gained in California and Alaska was invaluable preparation for the great task now set for him. His ready resource and great personal courage were also incalculable assets. (As an instance of the latter, I could tell you how, to permit him to make certain imperative observations, he allowed himself to be lowered over the side of a sheer cliff at a point only partially protected from the enemy's fire.)

"Well, the tunnel was started about the middle of January, 1916. Some of my men—Italians who had hurried home to fight for their country when the war started—had had some previous experience with hand and machine drills in the mines of Colorado and British Columbia, but the most of our labour had to gain its experience as the work progressed. Considering this, as well as the difficulty of bringing up material (to say nothing of food and munitions), we made very good progress.

"The worst thing about it all was the fact that it had to be done under the incessant fire of the Austrian artillery. I provided for the men as best I could by putting them in galleries, where they were at least able to get their rest in comparative safety. My own headquarters were in a little shed in the lee of a big rock. When the enemy finally found out what we were up to they celebrated their discovery by a steady bombardment which lasted for fourteen days without interruption. During a certain forty-two hours of that fortnight there was, by actual count, an average of thirty-eight shells a minute exploding on our little position. With all the protection it was possible to provide, the strain became such that I found it advisable to change the battalion holding our portion of the summit every week. Did I have any respite myself? Well, hardly; or, rather, not until I had to.

"We were constantly confronted with new and perplexing problems—things which no one had ever been called upon to solve before—most of them in connection with transportation. How we contrived to surmount one of these I shall never forget. The Austrians had performed a brave and audacious feat in emplacing one of their batteries at a certain point, the fire from

which threatened to make our position absolutely untenable. The location of this battery was so cunningly chosen that not a single one of our guns could reach it, and yet we *had* to silence it—and for good—if we were going to go on with our work. The only point from which we could fire upon these destructive guns was so exposed that any artillery we might be able to mount there could only count on the shortest shrift under the fire of the hundred or more 'heavies' that the Austrians would be able to concentrate upon it. And yet (I figured), well employed, these few minutes might prove enough to do the work in. As there was no other alternative, I decided to chance it.

"And then there arose another difficulty. The smallest gun that would stand a chance of doing the job cut out for it weighed 120 kilos—about 260 pounds; this just for the gun alone, with all detachable parts removed. But the point where the gun was to be mounted was so exposed that there was no chance of rigging up a cable-way, while the incline was so steep and rough that it was out of the question trying to drag it up with ropes. Just as we were on the verge of giving up in despair, one of the Alpini—a man of Herculean frame who had made his living in peace-time by breaking chains

on his chest and performing other feats of strength—came and suggested that he be allowed to carry the gun up on his shoulder. Grasping at a straw, I let him indulge in a few ' practice manœuvres ' ; but these only showed that while the young Samson could shoulder and trot off with the gun without great effort, the task of lifting himself and his burden from foothold to foothold in the crumbling rock of the seventy degree slope was too much for him.

" But out of this failure there came a new idea. Why not let my strong man simply support the weight of the gun on his shoulder—acting as a sort of ambulant gun-carriage, so to speak—while a line of men pulled him along with a rope ? We rigged up a harness to equalise the pull on the broad back, and, with the aid of sixteen ordinary men, the feat was accomplished without a hitch. I am sorry to say, however, that poor Samson was laid up for a spell with racked muscles.

" The gun—with the necessary parts and munition—was taken up in the night, and at daybreak it was set up and ready for action. It fired just forty shots before the Austrian ' heavies ' blew it—and all but one or two of its brave crew—to pieces with a rain of high-explosive. But it had done its work, and done

it well. The sacrifice was not in vain. The troublesome Austrian battery was put so completely out of action that the enemy never thought it worth while to re-emplace it.

"That is just a sample of the fantastic things we were doing all of the three months that we drove the tunnel under the summit of the Col di Lana. The last few weeks were further enlivened by the knowledge that the Austrians were countermining against us. Once they drove so near that we could feel the jar of their drills, but they exploded their mine just a few metres short of where it would have upset us for good and all. All the time work went on until, on April 17, the mine was finished, charged, and 'tamped.' That night, while every gun we could bring to bear rained shell upon the Austrian position, it was exploded. A crater 150 feet in diameter and sixty feet deep engulfed the ridge the enemy had occupied, and this our waiting Alpini rushed and firmly held. Feeble Austrian counter-attacks were easily repulsed, and the Col di Lana was at last completely in Italian hands."

Colonel Garibaldi leaned back in his chair and gazed thoughtfully at the cracks in the ceiling as one whose tale is finished. The end

had come rather abruptly, I thought, and I was inclined to press for further details.

"It must have been a grand sight," I ventured—"that mountain-top blowing off into the air with hundreds of shells bursting about it. Where were you at the great moment?"

The grave face grew a shade graver, and a wistful smile softened the lines of the firm mouth.

"Not in sight of the Col di Lana, I am sorry to say," was the reply. "My health broke down a fortnight before the end, and another officer was in command at the climax. It was one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I would have given my right hand to have been the first man into that crater. But never mind," he concluded, rising and squaring his broad shoulders; "bigger things than the Col di Lana are ahead before this war is over, and I feel that I am not going to miss any more of them. It's the Garibaldi way, you know, to be in at the death."

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